Eating for the Planet

Exploring Sustainable Food Consumption in London

Marte Eriksen Giæver

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Culture, Environment and Sustainability

Centre for Development and the Environment

University of Oslo

Blindern, Norway

May 2014

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Acknowledgements

During the last year working on my master's thesis there have been numerous people without whom this master would not be what it is.

To my supervisor Karen L. Syse, thank you for motivating me and making me keep to a schedule, and for your useful feedback and tips throughout the whole process.

To my classmates at SUM, thank you for sharing tips, ideas, reassurance and frustrations with me. My conversations with you have been invaluable.

Thank you to my friends and family for supporting and encouraging me, as well as making me take breaks and think about other things, which gave me newfound inspiration. A special thank you goes to my brother Jonas who took the time to proof read my thesis.

Thank you to the staff and long-term guests at the Norwegian YWCA (KFUK-hjemmet) in London for providing such a great home base during my fieldwork, and for providing encouragement in times of frustration and uncertainty.

Above all, thank you to my informants who took time out of their days to share their thoughts with me. Without you, this thesis would simply not exist.

Thank You!

Marte Eriksen Giæver

Oslo, May 2014

Map of London Boroughs

Source: London Councils (londoncouncils.gov.uk)

1. Introduction

Presenting the problem

Modern food production and consumption practices release greenhouse gases and other pollutants which contribute to global warming, while also causing resource depletion and environmental degradation of local landscapes. According to Defra (2007), food and drink consumption in Europe is responsible for about one third of each household's total environmental impact. The public has become more aware of the huge impact of food production and consumption on nature, climate and environment. However, this general awareness has not yet resulted in major changes in food practices (Spaargaren et al. 2012: 2). That being said, while the majority of the Western population continues to over-consume foods that have adverse effects on the environment, there are some who are attempting to make a difference through their shopping and eating practices. These sustainable consumers buy and consume foods that are thought have less of a negative impact on the environment than conventional foods. This includes organic, local, seasonal and vegetarian food. If shopping and eating sustainable foods represent important ways individuals try to address social and environmental problems, it is important to better understand how and why people engage in this practice.

Research questions

My main research question is: *Who* consumes sustainable foods, and *why*? The research question is twofold- first, inquiring who it is that consumes sustainable foods, including their demographics and backgrounds, and then asking why, finding their reasons and motivations for consuming these foods. The emphasis will be placed on the *why*, as I will look at personal reasons and motivations, and explain how culture and social factors affect the shopping decisions of these

sustainable consumers. I will also explore the many dilemmas they face. Thus, my sub-questions are:

- Who consumes sustainable foods; what are their backgrounds and how did they get into sustainable food consumption?

- What motivates them to consume sustainable foods? What dilemmas do they face in this pursuit?

- What part do cultural and social factors play in sustainable consumption practices?

Although this subject has been studied before, both through quantitative studies (see Hughner et al. 2007, Magnusson et al. 2003, Boström & Klintman 2009, Gilg et al. 2005, Vermeir & Verbeke 2006: 171) and qualitative studies (see Beagan et al. 2010, Johnston et al. 2011, Halkier 2001b, Bugge 1995, Weatherell et al. 2003), my research is, as far as I know, the only qualitative research on this subject in London. In contrast to most of the former studies, I focus specifically on the consumers who regularly buy and eat sustainable foods including local, organic, seasonal and vegetarian/vegan- not limiting the scope to organic food like some of the aforementioned studies. I also include their backgrounds and their reasons for becoming sustainable consumers, which is not that common in other studies. In addition to this, there are relatively few qualitative studies of food consumption that focus on the ways consumers deal with environmental issues in their everyday lives. Instead of doing a literature review, I will present the literature as I use it throughout the thesis. The scope of my thesis has been limited by time constraints as I only had one year at my disposal, three months of which were dedicated to fieldwork.

Rationale for topic

The extent to which people conceptualise sustainable consumption and how they think about food ethics in everyday shopping is not yet fully understood (Johnston et al. 2011: 293). Also, "little is known about the motives that drive some toward, or deter others from, higher levels of ethical concern and action in their purchasing decision" (Freestone & McGoldrick in Guido 2009: 4). Hence, there is a need for more empirical studies of ethical consumer practices within the complexity of everyday life, as well as studies on how class and culture shape the meanings and motives behind sustainable food consumption. In mainstream sustainable consumption research and policies, the focus has been placed on the individual consumer and his or her values and reflexive, rational choices. However, relationships with other people, routines, habits, social norms and cultural values often influence the consumption choices of individuals (Wilhite 2012a). Therefore it is important to explore the reasons why people choose to consume sustainable foods in their particular socio-cultural contexts through a bottom-up approach, where local subjects and their perceptions and practices are studied.

Study area: London and the UK

According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra 2012), the UK Government recognises that more needs to be done when it comes to the food chain and its impact on the environment. In 2008, the strategy unit reporting to the Cabinet Office in the UK published "Food matters: Towards a strategy for the 21st century", where it is stated that "the Government's vision for the food system is one that is more sustainable- economically, socially and environmentally" (Cabinet Office 2008: i). This signals a commitment in the UK from upper levels of Government to move towards a more sustainable national food policy. However, "policy is only the first step and needs to be underpinned

by processes, knowledge and leadership to translate the lofty goals into reality" (Blay-Palmer 2010: 6). Oosterveer (2012) argues that the UK Government has in fact not been very involved in increasing sustainability in food provision, that there has been little leadership from them, and that there is an absence of positive examples in the government's own behaviour (Oosterveer 2012: 166).

In the UK, retailers are deeply involved in consumer markets both when it comes to production and distribution processes, and retail distribution is dominated by a relatively small number of large multiple retailers (Torjusen et al. 2004: 70; Oosterveer 2012: 163). In 2011, only four firms controlled approximately 75% of the market for all food in the UK with one retail firm in particular (Tesco) controlling close to 30% of the total food market (Goodman 2013). Supermarkets in the UK have also, more than those in other countries, taken a leading role in changes towards more sustainability in food provisioning, which has led to dramatic growth in demand and supply of organic food (Oosterveer 2012: 164; Torjusen et al. 2004: 70). According to the Soil Association's 2014 Organic Market Report, the major retailers now account for 71.3% of organic spending (Soil Association 2014: 7). Thus supermarkets have played a crucial role in making organic food more ordinary and available to a larger number of different socio-economic groups in the UK (Goodman 2013). However, the involvement of supermarkets in the organic sector makes many consumers uneasy as it may erode the original organic values.

The organic food market in the UK has steadily grown, making organic food increasingly mainstream. Demand for organic products dampened following the economic downturn, showing a 1.5% decrease in organic sales overall in the UK in 2012 and a decrease in the total area of in conversion and organic land in the UK (Soil Association 2013: 3; Defra 2013a). However, the 2014 Soil Association market report shows that organic products are again on the rise, with sales increasing by 2.8% in 2013. Support for farm shops, markets and

independent retailers has increased by 6.9% in 2013 suggesting that many consumers are looking for a deeper relationship with the production values behind their food. This growth has partly been caused by the horsemeat scandal, which made consumers demand to know where their food was coming from (Soil Association 2014: 7).

The local food movement is considered to be particularly successful and widespread in the UK, covering many outlets, but in particular box schemes and farmer's markets, as well as other online purchasing and home-delivery schemes (Torjusen et al. 2004: 69; Soil Association 2013). There are currently over 500 farmers' markets in the UK, about 25 of which are located in London (Defra 2013b). Vegetarianism is also quite wide spread in the UK compared to other European countries, with 6% of the population claiming to be vegetarian (Warde 1997: 32). This shows that there is clearly an awareness and interest among parts of the British society regarding sustainable food consumption practices and its potential to reduce harmful human impacts on the environment. London is a regional hotspot for sustainable consumption as it accounts for nearly a third (32%) of organic sales nationally (Soil Association 2013: 7). Additionally, London has a number of farmers' markets, sustainability networks and community gardens. The fact that it is a big, cosmopolitan city makes London an interesting place to study environmental concerns and local, sustainable food consumption.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters including the introduction and conclusion. In this introductory chapter I have presented my research questions and the study area as well as outlined the problem. The second chapter introduces the subject and concepts I will use throughout my thesis, such as the concepts of sustainable food consumption and the sustainable consumer. The next chapter

describes my methodology, specifically looking at the study of food as well as how I collected my data through ethnographic fieldwork in London. In chapter four I look into who sustainable consumers are, first exploring results from several other studies, and then examining how my informants came to be the sustainable food consumers they are today. Having explained their backgrounds, chapter five deals with my informants' personal motivations and needs for eating sustainably, as well as the dilemmas they face in their everyday practices of sustainable eating. In chapter six cultural and social factors are considered, as I explore how social relationships, habits, material environments and social class affect my informants' sustainable food practices. Finally, in the last chapter I present some concluding remarks.

2. What is sustainable food consumption?

The concept of sustainability originates from the ecological sciences where it is associated with reciprocity between people and nature (van Otterloo 2012:70). However, sustainability was widely and globally introduced as part of the concept of 'sustainable development' in the 1987 U.N. World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report "Our Common Future", where it was defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED in Hinrichs, 2010: 21). There is much confusion and debate about its exact meaning and the term has not been particularly useful because of the inherent contradiction of advocating both growth and limits to growth. The term 'sustainable *consumption*' entered the international policy arena in Agenda 21, the action plan for sustainable development adopted by 179 heads of state at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. This was the first time in international environmental discourse that over-consumption in the developed world was pointed to as a direct cause of unsustainability (Seyfang 2005: 292).

Sustainability became a popular word for food after 2000, and interest in sustainable production and sustainable consumption has steadily increased at all levels of the agriculture and food chain (Vermeir & Verbeke 2006: 169). Nowadays the word is used by everyone from alternative niches to the mainstream food sector (van Otterloo 2012: 79- 81; Hinrichs 2010: 17). "The need to make both food production and consumption more 'sustainable' has been recognised and accepted by most major actors and stakeholders in the food sector, from Unilever to McDonalds, from the European Commission to the local school board, from vegetarians to meat lovers" (Spaargaren et al. 2012: 3). Even though the concept sustainability contains varied meanings for different stakeholders and actors, is quite abstract, and perhaps overused due to its recent popularity; I argue, with Hinrichs (2010), that it is still a useful concept when

dealing with food consumption and its environmental and socio-economic impacts.

Sustainability is a process rather than an endpoint, so a tightly drawn definition is both difficult and undesirable (Hinrichs 2010: 32). However, the definition of sustainable diets created in the symposium "Biodiversity and Sustainable diets: United against hunger" organised by FAO and Biodiversity international in 2010, is useful for my research:

> Sustainable diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimising natural and human resources (Burlingame 2012: 7).

Consumption is the "acquisition and use of things" (Wilhite 2008: 3), thus food consumption is understood in this thesis as the practices of food acquisition, cooking, and eating (Kjærnes 2012: 150). In order to understand exactly what sustainable food consumption is, the processes behind it are important to highlight. I therefore turn to look at mainstream food consumption and its impacts on the environment, before explaining the origin and development of the industrial food system. I then look at the reactions to this system through different sustainable food systems and initiatives, like the organic movement, localism and vegetarianism, before explaining the part sustainable consumers now play in these alternative food systems.

Food consumption and the environment

The food chain has major impacts on climate change, biodiversity, soil, water use and environmental degradation. Furthermore, food security is a problem because of a rising affluent global population as well as increasing demand for limited

resources such as water and land (Defra 2012: 3). Environmental impacts caused by emissions and land use changes are primarily caused by the production of a variety of different products, from energy conversion to agriculture and industrial production. However, all production ultimately serves the purpose of consumption, which makes consumption an important area of research (UNEP 2010: 45). Household consumption, in most countries, accounts for more than 60% of all environmental impacts of consumption and is responsible for 72% of greenhouse gas emissions at the global level (UNEP 2010: 48). Furthermore, among household consumption practices, food consumption and agriculture is one of the most important drivers of environmental pressures, accounting for a staggering 70% of the global freshwater consumption, 38% of total land use, and 14% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions (UNEP 2010: 2).

The expansion of the human population and changes in diet have been important drivers for ecosystem degradation and emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants that accumulate in the environment (GOS 2011: 10). According to UNEP (2010: 23), over the past 50 years humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable time period in human history. Increased demand for land for agriculture and grazing has led to tropical deforestation, which not only releases large amounts of greenhouse gases, but also may have direct and damaging effects on local climates, and causes major loss of biodiversity (UNEP 2010: 23; GOS 2011: 32). Tropical deforestation is especially prevalent in South-East Asia because of oil palm conversion, and South America, where conversion to soybean cultivation and cattle ranching are the greatest pressures. Livestock production, including both grazing land and feed crops, is the single largest anthropogenic user of land as it accounts for 70 % of all agricultural land and 30% of the land surface on the planet (FAO 2006). It is also responsible for approximately half of food-generated greenhouse gas emissions, and 18 % of global greenhouse gas emissions, which is a higher share than transport (FAO 2006; Garnett 2009: 491).

Energy use related to the transportation of food around the world adds to greenhouse gas emissions, which is counted in "food miles". In addition, non-seasonal fruits and vegetables cause substantial emissions when grown in greenhouses or preserved in a frozen state (UNEP 2010: 78-79). Food is also wasted at all stages of the food chain; in high-income countries waste happens mostly at the consumer end and in low-income countries more is wasted in production and transportation because of poor infrastructure and storage facilities (GOS 2011: 36). Population growth and economic growth will lead to higher environmental impacts and will compromise the world's capacity to produce food in the future unless patterns of production and consumption can be changed towards more sustainable systems (GOS 2011: 10; Paoletti 2012: 255). How did this environmentally damaging way of producing and consuming food become so prevalent in the first place?

The industrial food system

Cultural, social, historical and scientific factors all have a part to play in the creation and development of the industrial food system. Ideologies developing during the 18th and 19th century enlightenment, like the Cartesian mind-body split, made possible the scientific and mechanical developments needed for the industrialisation of the food system, as well as the ideas where man is seen as separate from and superior to nature. These ideologies have made scientific, technological and medical advancements possible, which in turn have made significant contributions to living standards. However, some of these ideas have also cut us off from our own senses and the relationship our body, and mind, has to the world around us. According to the philosopher and agriculturalist Christian Coff (2006), this also entails a distancing in our relation to food (Coff 2006: 61).

Along with this ideological shift, a more practical development in agriculture and food production methods took place. The agrarian revolution in Europe from the

16th to the 19th century, developing alongside the industrial revolution, involved the gradual industrialisation of agriculture through the introduction of new crops, changes in crop rotation and the introduction of machinery (Coff 2006: 61- 63; Pratt 2007: 286). Before the agrarian revolution, farms in Europe were more or less self-sufficient, with a circular and organic agricultural chain. However, starting with the first artificial fertilisers being introduced in the 19th century, systematic application of biochemical innovations as well as mechanisation of agricultural practices in the food system started a fundamental shift away from traditional modes of crop cultivation, animal breeding and food processing (Coff 2006: 65, van Otterloo 2012: 60; Pratt 2007). New and more complicated tools and means of labour were introduced, which replaced the local tools from the blacksmith and the labour power of the farmer. The arrival of railways in the middle of the 19th century improved infrastructure, which, along with the increased production of food due to the new farming methods, meant that foods could be exported from the farms to the growing cities of Europe. This and the transition from self-sufficiency to the market economy meant that the prime interest became specialisation in terms of monocultures instead of versatility since this offers greater opportunity for efficiency, sale and export. These developments meant that food now became a commodity (Coff 2006: 65-77).

The sociologist Anneke van Otterloo (2012) writes about how economic and cultural changes in Europe in the fifties and sixties affected consumer demand for more convenient and diverse food. Before and during World War II there had been a shortage of foods, but the application of economic rationality in the food system, as well as further agricultural intensification stimulated by post-war economic and political developments in Europe, led to a tremendous growth in food production and distribution (van Otterloo 2012: 60). With the economy growing, the food industry strongly expanded and the market for more varied foodstuffs in Europe grew, strengthening the on-going processes of specialisation and product differentiation. In the 1960s, food and its cultural position in

Northern European countries changed further, where eating habits became an increasingly important aspect of people's lifestyle and identity. More and more people had money to spend on traveling and eating out, and diversity started becoming part of a new lifestyle. In addition, the increasing use of the car and the refrigerator contributed to a new way of producing and buying food (van Otterloo 2012: 62-65). Convenience for the food consumer was increasingly played out in the packaging of products and the design of the shops, including the appearance and proliferation of supermarkets, which heralded the end of daily shopping round of baker, butcher, grocer and market stall (Kjærnes et al. 2007: 2).

In the 1980s the mainstream food chain started using biochemical products and techniques to process raw materials, which were often broken down into components and then reconstituted, and the use of preservatives, antioxidants, artificial colourings and flavourings progressed (Pratt 2007: 286; van Otterloo 2012: 74). This led to food qualities the majority of consumers accepted, such as longer shelf life, convenience, tastes, colours and even more diversity. During the 1990s, the mainstream food system developed links to producers, retailers and consumers all over the world in an ever expanding and diversifying global network, and transnational corporations' power in the food chain began to rise (van Otterloo 2012: 74; Pratt 2007: 286). The DNA technology to alter the genes of plants and animals, resulting in genetically modified organisms (GMOs), was developed in the 1990s to combat plant pests, protect crops from harsh conditions and improve nutritional value, and was then applied to commercial crops such as soybeans and maize. This development and the occurrence of a series of livestock diseases were two important issues which raised consumer awareness towards the adverse effects of the industrial system, which I will get into in the next subchapter (Kjærnes et al. 2007: 3; van Otterloo 2012: 74).

Changes in consumption practices, both when it comes to diets and eating patterns, have happened along with developments in the industrial food system. Increasingly, food does not come from farmers and markets, but from integrated food chains, and much domestic labour has been transferred to an industrial setting, which has caused a disconnect between producers and consumers. (Kjærnes et al. 2007: 2; Coff 2006: 69). Furthermore, there has been a sharp decline in home-prepared and consumed meals along with a corresponding increase in meals consumed outside the home (Miele & Murdoch 2003: 27). In fact, close to half of the family food budget in the UK, as in the US, is spent in restaurants, bars and on take-away food, and supermarket chains now provide more than three-quarters of the food eaten in most of Europe and North America (Pratt 2007: 286). In addition, as a result of global sourcing, food has almost ceased to be seasonal, and transported exotic fruits and vegetables have become commonplace (Kjærnes et al. 2007: 2). The whole food system has changed from an organic, circular system to a mechanistic, economically optimised one. "Outsized, standardised, environmentally degrading, wasteful, unjust, unhealthy, placeless, disempowering- these are a few of the tags that the industrialised, global food system invites" (Hinrichs 2010: 18). However, people did react to the methods and effects of the increasingly industrial food system, and alternative food systems have been created in its opposition.

The reaction: sustainable food systems

The issue of the health and safety of food had been a public worry in Europe since the beginning of the industrialisation of food, the concern strengthening with the growth and intensification of industrialisation and modernisation in production practices. However, it was not until the 1970s that environmental pollution and the exhaustion of natural resources became a focus of attention and a topic of political action as well as public and expert debate. This sparked action groups to fight for the protection of the environment, particularly Greenpeace

(founded in 1970) and Friends of the Earth (founded in 1969) (van Otterloo 2012: 67). Some of these groups became active in the domain of food and created networks which came to function as niches of alternative food production and consumption, stimulating local small-scale growers to work naturally or ecologically soundly, without artificial fertilisers or pesticides. Alternative farming methods thus became part of the social movement developing within the 'green wave' (Klintman & Boström 2012: 110). The scope of the concern was now wider than merely personal health and safety and included solidarity with people beyond one's immediate surroundings and concern for the environment (van Otterloo 2012: 68- 70).

Public concern about food safety and environmental security waned in the 1980s due to economic crises in Europe, but resurfaced in the 1990s when the rise of GM technology strengthened consumers' fears about unnatural substances ending up in their bodies, and making the environmental movement fear environmental damage by genetic pollution (van Otterloo 2012: 70; Kjærnes et al. 2007: 3). European consumers, as opposed to US consumers, worried about eating this 'Frankenstein food', and the ideals of natural, ecological and organic food was revived, along with the aim for short supply chains and regional products (van Otterloo 2012: 74). The widespread industrialisation of cattle farming also strengthened alternative views and eco-farming. In the late 1980s the outbreak of an unknown infection, later named mad cow disease (BSE, bovine spongiforme encephalopathy), disrupted the global export and import chain of cows, beef and animal feed. The disease turned out to be detrimental and even lethal to humans as well (van Otterloo 2012: 75). The large scale slaughter of likely infected animals was widely shown in the media and contributed to public indignation about production methods and the fates of farm animals. However, in the daily meal, beef was not massively abandoned, and a widespread drop in consumers' trust in food safety failed to come. A whole series of outbreaks of different diseases among industrialised animals was to

follow: foot-and-mouth disease, avian influenza, swine fever, bluetounge and Q fever (van Otterloo 2012: 76).

The movements for sustainable food systems attempt to re-establish links between production and consumption, and are unified around rejecting the practices of the global corporate food system and the commodification of food (Hinrichs 2010: 18; McMichael 2003: 83). According to Lairon (2012), sustainable food systems should be based on low-input ecological staple food production including limited animal husbandry, short supply chains, minimal food processing and refining, important culinary skills, diet and nutritional education, and links to local cultures (Lairon 2012: 32). There are signs that these movements are growing, including large increases in organic acreage worldwide, the proliferation of farmers' markets, farm shops, box-schemes, community-supported agriculture, and farm-to school programs (Hinrichs 2010: 18). The most influential and widespread sustainable movements and initiatives today are the organic movement, localised food systems, and vegetarianism/veganism, which I will take a brief look at.

The organic food movement

The term organic farming was first used by Oxford University agriculturalist Lord Northbourne in his book "Look to the Land", published in 1940. It was a response to what he called 'chemical farming', which he placed in opposition to organic farming (Paull 2006: 14). Northbourne was influenced by the thoughts of Rudolf Steiner, who also inspired the movement for biodynamic farming. He saw the farm as an organism: "the farm itself must have a biological completeness; it must be a loving entity, it must be a unit which has within itself a balanced organic life" (Northbourne in Paull 2006: 14). Northbourne expressed concern about the economic rationalisation of the food system as he wrote "we have come to have no idea of profit other than financial profit… the delusion is that cheapness leads to plenty. But what use is plenty of rubbish?" (Northbourne in

Paull 2006: 15). He was also concerned about the loss of biodiversity and warned against monocultural farming (Paull 2006: 15).

Organic production can be defined as: "…an overall system of farm management and food production that combines the best environmental practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources, the application of high animal welfare standards and a production method in line with the preferences of certain consumers for products produced using natural substances and processes" (Paoletti 2012: 255). It is thus a production method more in harmony with the environment and local ecosystems (Seyfang 2006: 385). The organic movement was largely driven by ethical considerations and grew slowly. From the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, development was largely consumer led, prompted by public concern about food production and health, and the growth of the environmental movement (Latacz-Lohmann & Foster 1997: 276). The main objects of protest were large-scale production and distribution, structural rationalisation and chemical-based agriculture. As part of this protest, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) was established in 1972, and set basic standards for organic production and assisted in the development of national standards (Klintman & Boström 2012: 111). The organic food movement, then, has been representative of a movement towards a (re)-localisation or shortening of food supply chains, and explicitly challenges the industrial farming and global food transport model of conventional food consumption (Seyfang 2006: 386).

However, because organic agriculture has become more widespread, a need for reaching a larger market has emerged over the years. This has led to a 'conventionalisation' of organic foods, which means that the special attributes that are connected to organic products diminish or even disappear in the conventional food system. (Vittersø et al. 2005: 3). For example, even though the organic movement strongly recommends buying local foods, a high percentage

of organic fruit and vegetables are imported, leading to increased food miles and contributing to global warming (Blythman 2005; Torjusen et al. 2004). Julie Guthman also shows through her study of Californian organic agriculture that most organic fruit and vegetables are actually produced on large estates, using intensive methods and migrant wage-labour, are trucked across the continent and mostly sold in supermarkets (Pratt 2007: 287). Originally developing as an alternative in opposition to conventional farming, these practices makes the organic movement face serious difficulties in maintaining its identity as an alternative political power, and makes it difficult for consumers to trust that organic food is more environmentally friendly.

Localised food systems

Localisation of food supply chains entails that food should be consumed as close to the point of origin as possible. However, in a globalised world the construction of "local" will vary and is socially and culturally specific and fluid over time and space (Seyfang 2006: 386; Roos et al. 2007). The principal environmental reason for localising food supply chains is to reduce the impacts of 'food miles', the distance the food travels between being produced and being consumed, in order to avoid or reduce the quantity of non-renewable energy used and pollution caused by transporting food around the world (Seyfang 2006: 386; Pratt 2007). To produce food locally also ensures food security and avoids disturbances due to globalisation. Lairon (2012) highlights that growing foods within seasons and consuming them locally improves sustainability (Lairon 2012: 33).

Local food as an alternative movement or form of resistance reshapes the relationships between producers and consumers disrupted by the rise of the global food system, and reintegrates the complex web of local social, economic, ecological and political connections (Roos et al. 2007). In addition, these diverse localised food networks construct and strengthen local economies outside the capitalist system, contributing to rural development (Pratt 2007: 288; Seyfang

2006: 386). To that end there has been a growth of farmers' markets, farm shops, box schemes and other such initiatives that keeps money in local economies (Pratt 2007: 289; Blay-Palmer 2010: 7). These short supply chains are creating a new relationship between agricultural and urban worlds, and are according to Paoletti (2012) gaining more and more interest among consumers in western countries (Paoletti 2012: 258).

There are some issues involved in localising food chains. According to Seyfang (2006b), localisation can be a reaction to a perceived threat from globalisation and 'others', which can hinder the acceptance of diversity and difference, creating inequality instead of sustainability. It also raises the question of 'sustainability for who'?, as the "nascent desire for locally produced food in developed countries inevitably impacts upon the economic and social destinies of food-exporting developing countries" (Seyfang 2006: 386). Also, by buying local part of the energy question is addressed, but nothing else is guaranteed about the food itself; 'local' food does not necessarily mean good quality, healthy, or environmentally sound food (Pratt 2007: 289).

Vegetarianism (and veganism)

As mentioned earlier, the livestock sector is a major player in the reduction of biodiversity and deforestation as well as one of the leading drivers of land degradation, pollution, climate change, overfishing and sedimentation of coastal areas (FAO 2006). To reduce environmental impacts from livestock production, the UN recommends a substantial worldwide diet change away from animal products (UNEP 2010: 82). There are many reasons which lead people to becoming vegetarians, but according to Klintman & Boström (2012), even when environmental concerns has not figured as the initial motivation for becoming vegetarians, several studies show that such concerns have become important reasons to maintain their vegetarian diets. Furthermore, the environmental effects of meat and dairy production are increasingly a reason why some may choose to

become vegetarians or vegans in the first place (Klintman & Boström 2012: 115).

Vegetarianism has existed for centuries, and in some countries for millennia. Early vegetarianism was usually connected with religious and philosophical beliefs surrounding the idea of nonviolence towards animals. As an effect of the concept of human supremacy in Christianity, vegetarianism as a religious or spiritual choice practically disappeared in Europe during Christianisation (Spencer 1993: 116). Vegetarianism re-emerged to some extent during the Renaissance, and became a more widespread practice during the 19th and 20th centuries, a time when many vegetarians opposed the growing industrial and modern life style and food system, especially the exploitation and abuse of animals towards human ends (Spencer 1993). Vegetarianism has become more and more popular during the last decades due to ethical, nutritional, and environmental concerns. According to Paoletti (2012), the ecological motivations underlying vegetarian diet choice and organic food choice are quite similar (Paoletti 2012: 257).

Vegetarianism has become a social movement of considerable significance in the UK, where around 6 per cent of the population claim to be vegetarians, a much higher proportion than in other European countries (Warde 1997: 32). Vegetarianism means eating no meat, although dairy products and eggs are permitted. However, eating dairy products and eggs supports the system that exploits animals and harms the environment, which is why some vegetarians instead identify as vegans, who do not eat any animal products at all. Vegetarians and vegans thus avoid entire product categories for ethical reasons, and in this way they act as ethical consumers, making a difference through their consumption practices (Boström & Klintman 2009).

The sustainable consumer

Even though food consumption has always been physically necessary and culturally important, after the intensification of the mainstream food system and rise of mass consumption, the act of consuming came to be viewed as an identifiable activity in its own right. 'The consumer' as an economic, cultural and potentially political actor was created (van Otterloo 2012: 60). According to Spaargaren et al. (2012: 2), a power shift happened between farmers and consumers, where the consumers buying and using food gained significant power, while the farmers producing food lost power. The consumers' power is assumed to lie in their ability to dominate producers through shopping practices (Coff 2006: 79). In fact, neoclassical economic theory sees consumption "as the sole purpose of all production", where production systems are responding to the needs and wishes of consumers (Kjærnes 2012: 147).

These changes have contributed to the emergence of a new ethics of food, where consumers are increasingly encouraged and expected to take responsibility for promoting sustainability through their food choices (Kjærnes 2012: 155; Coff 2006). Consumers have thus become increasingly committed to selecting goods from a political and ethical point of view, which may be done either through boycotting products or through *buy*cotting; buying products that a consumer perceives as corresponding with his or her values (Coff 2006: 3; Boström & Klintman 2009). Consumption, then, has been politicised and made into the subject of individual moral judgment, where the individual is seen as political, reflexive and autonomous, and whose personal values are reflected in the ''voting'' at the checkout counter (Jacobsen & Dulsrud 2007: 470). However, the individual consumer cannot exert power without being in a group of individuals, as consumer activism does not emerge in isolation, but is supported by public debates and collective mobilisation. Hence what may appear as individual choices is part of a social process (Kjærnes 2012: 147; Coff 2006: 81). In

addition, food consumption is interwoven into clusters of everyday practices, embedded in social relations and social norms, and is an act that involves both choosers and providers of choices (Wilhite 2012a). Nonetheless, sustainable consumption can be a key way in which individuals understand and find solutions to social and ecological problems, giving them the feeling of being able to make a difference (Johnston et al. 2011: 294; Coff 2006: 82).

There are many terms used for sustainable consumers in the literature; political, ethical and green consumers being the most common ones. Ethical consumers can be defined as "those who, when making purchase decisions, consider the effects a choice has on the world around them" (Beagan et al. 2010: 753). Thus, ethical consumers choose, buy and evaluate products in a way which is consistent with their moral norms and with their support of certain environmental and societal issues (Guido 2009: 2). Political consumerism is similar in that it refers to the idea that consumers express non-economic, political values through the market arena (Boström & Klintman 2009: 2). I will mainly use the term 'sustainable consumers' in my thesis, because I want to focus on the environmental aspects of food consumption more than social and political ones. However, I might sometimes refer to ethical and political consumption, as sustainable consumption can be seen as an sub-category of these terms. According to Gilg et al. the 'sustainable consumer' is a more useful term as it is likely to be a component of a wider shift in lifestyles that invokes both purchase-related and habitual behaviours in everyday living (Gilg et al. 2005: 499).

Sustainability implies the use of resources at rates that do not exceed the capacity of the Earth to replace them, so that future generations may also meet their own needs. The rise of the industrial food system has compromised this by causing environmental degradation and contributing to climate change. Sustainable food movements and consumers are trying to create and uphold sustainable food systems as a more environmentally friendly alternative to the mainstream food

system. The rationales and motives behind the actions of these sustainable consumers are important to discover, which I have tried to do through qualitative, ethnographic research, the process of which I will present in the next chapter.

3. Methodology

I have conducted a qualitative study in London, United Kingdom, using ethnographic methods. Using qualitative methods to understand sustainable food consumption entails an attempt at understanding the meanings behind the consumption of such foods in people's everyday lives, taking account of the social and cultural context in which people think about, buy, prepare, eat and dispose of food products (Torjusen et al. 2004: 28). I will first look at the uniqueness and advantages of studying food as opposed to other consumer goods before explaining what ethnography is and how I collected my data. I will then explain how I have analysed the data, methodological challenges I met along the way, and lastly ethical considerations I had to make. But first: what exactly does it mean to study food consumption, and why is it a good research tool for understanding sustainability issues?

The study of food

As Miller & Deutsch (2009) say, food studies are not the study of food itself, but rather the study of the relationships between food and the human experience (Miller and Deutsch 2009: 3). The need for food is our primary biological drive, but beyond its material importance food also has tremendous cultural and symbolic importance, and it is a matter of psychological and emotional significance (Miller & Deutsch 2009: 6; Warde 1997: 22). In addition, food purchase, cooking and eating are activities embedded in the normative structures and routines of everyday life, and it is also a commodity which absorbs a considerable proportion of people's income (Torjusen et al- 2004: 28; Warde 1997: 180). As Hinrichs (2010) says: "we turn to food for nourishment, but also pleasure. As biological necessity, but also cultural expression, as personal taste and group tradition, as profit opportunity and as human right, food serves as fulcrum for endless analysis" (Hinrichs 2010: 19).

Food is different from many other fields used to explore consumption practices because much of the activity around food is private and domestic, and it concerns physical as well as emotional needs. Food is meaningful because it is social: people usually eat in company and live in households where decisions about what to eat are often collective and indirect, and it is a key aspect of family formation as well as household conflicts (Warde 1997: 180). This social aspect of food means that food consumption is less open to individualising than in other consumption fields, and it is also a lot more temporary; once you have eaten the food that is in you fridge, you can buy a completely different set of foods (Warde 1997: 180). Furthermore, food is not only a subject for the selfish consumer and household; it is rather an ethical subject with immense importance for society, nature and human beings (Coff 2006: 29).

Food's material and cultural importance and polyvalent significance makes it a compelling focus for research and practice, and a good tool for understanding social relations (Hinrichs 2010: 19; Warde 1997: 22). Through looking at people's relationship with food, one can learn a lot about their beliefs, passions, background knowledge and even personalities, according to Miller & Deutsch (2009: 7). Food can also be used as cultural expression and a way to comment upon contemporary culture, especially when it comes to sustainable food consumption (Warde 1997: 22). As both Hinrichs (2010) and Blay-Palmer (2010) contends, food serves as a good point of entry to understand and address sustainability challenges because, as we all eat, food is something everyone can relate to, it involves both environmental and socio-economic concerns, and translates complicated issues into meaningful ideas, policies and actions (Hinrichs 2010: 19; Blay-Palmer 2010: 7). Doing ethnographic fieldwork is a particularly good way to study food consumption and sustainability issues, for reasons I will look at next.

The ethnographic fieldwork

Ethnography literally means to write about other people, *ethnekos* meaning "other people", and *graphein* meaning "to write" (Miller & Deutsch 2009: 138). It is a qualitative research method which aims to describe, analyse and interpret groups of people, cultures, enterprises, or phenomena in a natural setting. Thus, ethnography essentially *is* fieldwork- the collection of data in a natural environment. Because ethnography allows the researcher to gain an understanding of a person or a group's social meaning of ordinary, everyday activities like selecting, buying, preparing and sharing food, it is a good tool for studying sustainable food consumption issues (Miller & Deutsch 2009: 138-140).

The ethnographic method considers the processes of meaning constructions among consumers and contextualises sustainable food consumption within the complexity of everyday lives, which, compared to survey research, leads to a better understanding of sustainable food consumption practices. Survey research on sustainable consumption issues measures opinions and attitudes consumers have towards sustainable foods, but cannot analyse whether real consumer behaviour follows from these attitudes, which it often does not, or how ethical issues conflict with other considerations like convenience and price in daily shopping decisions (Johnston et al. 2011: 297; Coff 2006: 4). Therefore, ethnographic methods were the best fit for my research. Ethnography is not one particular method, but rather a collection of research methods bundled together, such as observation, interviewing and document collection, which are the methods I have used to collect my data.

In-depth Interviews

I have conducted thirteen in-depth ethnographic interviews which lasted from one hour to an hour and a half with 13 informants, taking place mostly in cafés in London or in the informant's home or workplace. These interviews have served

as my main source of data. During the interviews I used an interview guide[1] with specific questions; however, I worked the questions into a conversational flow so that informants could talk about what they felt were important in greater depth. When the informants touched upon something particularly important or interesting, I probed those areas with follow-up questions. During the interviews my informants discovered memories and feelings they had concerning food, which led to informative digressions, allowing me to discover additional information about their relationship to and thoughts around sustainable food. According to Miller & Deutsch (2009), conversations about food often contain such useful digressions (Miller & Deutsch 2009: 149). Doing in-depth qualitative interviews allowed me to discover the relationship between abstract commitments to sustainable eating and everyday food practices, as they allowed for explanation of the informants' meanings (Johnston et al. 2011: 312; Miller & Deutsch 2009: 149). I used a tape recorder, which has given me more detailed data, and it was less disruptive for the informants. At the same time, I could focus more on details and contexts around the conversation, like body language and coming up with asking relevant follow-up questions. I transcribed the interviews as soon as I could, which was important in order to have the interviews clear in my mind.

My informants were all people who regularly bought and ate sustainable foods like organic, local, seasonal and vegetarian food. They were recruited through farmers' markets, London-based sustainability networking websites like London21[2] and Project Dirt[3], as well as through snowball sampling, which means that my informants and other contacts suggested people I could interview who also are sustainable eaters. I interviewed 9 women and 4 men between the ages

[1] See appendix A

[2] http://www.london21.org/

[3] http://www.projectdirt.com/

of 26 and 72[4]. They were from different parts of London, which has highlighted area differences when it comes to availability of, and communities for, sustainable food. Two lived in East London, two in Central London, one in South London, one in East London and seven in North London. The high number of people from North London is partly because there is a high interest in this part of London for sustainable food consumption, but also because quite a few of my informants were recruited through a contact in a sustainability group based in a borough in North London.

Observation

Observation entails seeing what people do in natural settings. In my research I have observed shoppers at farmers markets and other alternative food outlets. I visited 15 farmers' markets in London, 13 of which were operated by "London farmers' markets"[5]. The additional two markets I visited were Stoke Newington farmers' market operated by the community-led network Growing Communities, and Hammersmith Farmers' market operated by City & Country Farmers' Markets. I also visited three city farms, Spitafields City Farm in the borough Tower Hamlets in East London, Deen City farm in the borough of Merton in South London and Vauxhall city farm in the borough of Lambeth in Central London. To explore the venues where people shopped on a more regular basis, I visited sustainable cafés in London, like Daylesford Organics, Le Pain Quotidien and Down to Earth and organic and non-organic supermarkets like Planet Organic, Whole Foods Market, Tesco, Waitrose, M&S Foods and Sainsbury's. In these supermarkets I compared prices on some key food items in order to explore the price differences between organic and non-organic produce[6]. In addition, I

[4] See appendix C for a list of the informants.

[5] London farmer's markets organise 19 FARMA (The Farmers' Retail and Market Association) certified farmer's markets in London. See http://www.lfm.org.uk/

[6] See appendix D

attended Capital Growth's food growing training "Growing winter and autumn vegetables workshop" in Regents Park, and I went on a three-day trip to Daylesford Organics' farm in Gloucestershire, which is the farm from which the three Daylesford Organics cafés in London get their produce. While in the field I wrote field notes, where I wrote about events I experienced, and described the contexts in which these events took place. I also wrote down my own thoughts about what I had experienced, my reactions, my feelings, and temporary attempts at analysis.

Document collection

In addition to interviews and observation, I have analysed written sources which contribute to sustainable food consumption practices in the UK. This includes cookbooks that focus on local, ethical food, like Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's books, TV-shows, like River Cottage, and websites for ethical or ecological networks and shops. Documentaries and books about food system issues have also been looked into. In addition, I have compared my findings with academic writings about sustainable food consumption in other places such as Canada (Johnston et al. 2011, Beagan et al. 2010). I have also used statistical documents, governmental papers and reports as well as newspaper articles. Including document collection in my research means that I have been able to contextualise my material in contemporary British society (Fangen 2004: 151). As shown I have used a variety of methods and sources to collect my data. According to Miller & Deutsch (2009), this way of working enhances the validity and rigour of my research and identifies different views on sustainable food consumption.

Analysing data

Analysis of data starts from the first moment in a fieldwork, and it includes all levels of interpretation and processing of the material (Fangen 2004: 170). As

mentioned, I wrote down temporary attempts at analysis in my fieldnotes, and I considered different themes and categories as they presented themselves and then reoccurred during the fieldwork. When I got back to Oslo and the Centre for Development and the Environment, I started analysing the data I had collected through in-depth examination of my transcripts by sorting, clustering and comparing segments of transcribed text in order to generate themes and categories to use in my analysis (Beagan et al. 2010: 757). I did not use a computer program to categorise my data, instead I manually read through the transcripts multiple times and looked for themes that had already appeared during the fieldwork, as well as discovering new ones inductively. The experience of being in the field, reading theory and returning to my interview transcriptions, documents and fieldnotes again and again helped my analyses and interpretations (Fangen 2004: 91). I have attempted to find a balance between etic and emic analysis, that is, between an analysis where I use already existing theoretical concepts, and an analysis where I use concepts used by my informants (Fangen 2004: 194).

Methodological challenges

A challenge in ethnographic research is that I, as all ethnographic researchers, entered the field with a set of biases, prejudices, and conceptions which could possibly influence where I focused my attention (Miller & Deutsch 2009: 148). I tried to be aware of my biases and my place in the field, and the ways in which this could affect my research. It is important to be reflexive about how not only my own place in the field can affect the data collected, but also the position of my informants in their own societies, and their interest in self-representation (Stewart 1998). As Miller & Deutsch (2009: 150) say, social acceptance can affect how the informant answers questions. The fact that my informants knew that I was a student from Centre for Development and Environment, which it said on the letter of informed consent they had to sign prior to the interviews, might

have influenced how they replied to my questions, possibly by highlighting their environmental concerns.

Ethical considerations

Prior to my fieldwork, the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) approved my project and it also got approval from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services after having reported to them how I was going to manage personal information collected in the field. The subject of my research is not a specifically contentious one, and all of my informants were more than willing to talk about their sustainable food consumption practices. However, the nature of ethnographic research entails that I as the researcher get access to my informants' personal spheres, which means I need to treat the data I get with caution. To this end, I have protected my informant's confidentiality through anonymising them in the thesis by changing their names and other information that could reveal their identity. In addition, I have obtained their informed consent by having them sign a letter of informed consent prior to the interviews[7].

The methodology I have used in my research has been presented and I have explained what food studies are and what an ethnographic fieldwork entails, as well as why this type of research is a good choice for my topic. I have also explained how I collected my data in the field, through in-depth interviews, observation and document collection, and how I have analysed my data. In addition, methodological challenges and ethical considerations in my research have been discussed. Having explained the methodology I have used to conduct my research, I will now move on to answering the research question, beginning with the first part of it: who are sustainable consumers, and what led them to become interested in sustainable foods in the first place?

[7] See appendix B

4. The Path to Sustainable Eating

In this chapter I will explore who consumes sustainable foods. What are their backgrounds and upbringing? How and why did they become sustainable consumers? First I will look at what several quantitative studies have found to be the typical sustainable (or green/political/ethical) consumers, go through these categories, and look at how my informants fit into them. I will then look closer at any similarities in my informants' upbringing and backgrounds and explore the paths they took to becoming sustainable consumers.

Who are sustainable consumers?

There have been numerous quantitative studies that have investigated what types of people are most likely to be sustainable (or green/political/ethical) consumers. And while the research results are sometimes contradictory, there have been some consistent results across studies (Hughner et al. 2007: 96). These results show that sustainable consumers in general belong to the middle or upper-middle class, are female, have good incomes, are well educated, are in their lower middle age or middle age, have children and are politically active and liberal (Boström & Klintman 2009: 3; Hughner et al. 2007: 96; Gilg et al. 2005: 484; Vermeir & Verbeke 2006: 171). However, as previously mentioned, quantitative studies can only measure opinions and attitudes, and not whether actual consumer behaviour takes place. In addition, such results are broad generalisations (Gilg et al. 2005: 493). Nonetheless, I will go through these categories of sustainable consumers, and look at how my informants fit into these, starting with the issue of gender.

According to Boström & Klintman (2009), study after study confirms that women are more environmentally and ethically engaged than men when it comes to consumption in everyday life. In my research I noticed that it was easier to

recruit women for interviews than men, and I ended up with nine women and four men as informants. Also, when I went to Growing Communities gardening course I noticed that there were seven women and three men attending. The reasons for this gender difference could be many, but according to Boström & Klintman (2009: 4) it is a common explanation that women more than men commit to post-material values, and that women are more worried about environmental and health-related risks. In addition, because of pregnancy and motherhood, women might commit more to values of re-production. However, this gender gap may also relate to gender role expectations and division of labour in the households; it is still usually women who have the responsibility for purchasing daily products (Gilg et al. 2005: 502). As research on sustainable consumption typically focuses on such daily products, there might be a bias towards the gender gap (Boström & Klintman 2009: 4). Nonetheless, especially when it comes to food consumption, it seems reasonable to believe that women to a greater extent than men consider non-economic values like environmental issues (Boström & Klintman 2009: 4).

Age has been a less consistent factor in research on sustainable consumers. Magnusson et al.'s (2003) research showed that younger respondents were more likely to be positive towards organic foods. However, many other studies find that sustainable consumers are older, in their middle age or lower middle age (Boström & Klintman 2009: 3; Hughner et al. 2007: 96; Gilg et al. 2005: 484). An explanation for this could be that younger consumers may hold more positive attitudes toward organically grown food, yet older consumers are more likely to be purchasers, possibly because foods such as organic food may be more affordable to them (Hughner et al. 2007: 96). According to the Soil Association's 2013 Organic Market Report, the most committed buyers of organic food in the UK are aged 28-44: this is the age bracket where organic products attract the highest spend compared to the national average for all age groups. However, retired people and 'empty nesters' still account for almost half of all UK

spending on organic products (48.6%), while the 'Jamie Generation' of ethically aware under-35s (16% of sales) significantly increased their average spending in 2012 (Soil association 2013: 6-7). In my research I consciously tried to choose informants from different age groups, which was quite easy, as there seems to be a wide age span among people active in sustainable organisations and groups in London. My youngest informant was twenty-six years old, there were four people in their thirties, two in their forties, two in their fifties, three in their sixties, and the oldest informant was seventy-two years old. The attendees at the gardening course I took also varied from people in their twenties to people in their fifties. Visiting several farmers' markets also revealed that people of all ages use these venues, although perhaps in some of them the 'Jamie Generation' were the most prominent. Thus, it seems that age is less of a factor than gender when it comes to the likelihood of people being sustainable consumers.

According to Hughner et al.'s (2009: 96) research on organic food consumption, attempts to classify organic food purchasers by income and education have been mixed, and some have been inconclusive. However, Bostöm & Klintman (2009: 6) found that several studies showed a positive correlation between high formal education and green political consumerism. Also in Gilg et al.'s (2005) research on green consumption among households in Devon, UK, results showed that committed environmentalists were more likely to have a degree than non-environmentalists. They were also more likely to own their own home and have higher incomes (Gilg et al. 2005: 493). All my informants except one had a bachelor's degree or higher (five having master's degrees and one having a PhD), and had middle class backgrounds, albeit some in the lower part. Their income varied, some having to think more about their purchases than others. One of my informants, Heather, did not make a lot of money, but still purchased sustainable foods: "I mean I don't have a particularly large income, I live on £70 a week and that's it, so I live on about £3000 a year at the moment. But I *will* buy food based on its environmental impact". This can be seen as an example of a

consumer who is strongly committed to sustainable food as a way of life, having less income but still buying organic food even if it's disproportionately expensive. On the other hand, there are consumers who might buy organic foods simply because they have the money to do so (Torjusen et al. 2004: 75).

Studies indicate that sustainable consumers are more politically active than non-environmental consumers (Boström & Klintman 2009: 5; Gilg et al. 2005: 493). Gilg et al's (2005) research showed that a large proportion of non-environmentalists did not vote, while committed environmentalists were more likely to vote, usually either for the Green Party or Liberal Democrats. The latter were also significantly more likely to be members of a community organisation (Gilg et al. 2005: 493). All of my informants were members of one or more community organisations, some of them being more active than others. Some of my informants' political and environmental activism actually (at least partly) led to their interest in sustainable foods. Julie for example said: "I was already quite involved in the left wing society, so it was probably part of that". Likewise, Andrew said: "I've always been a bit of a greenie, so I probably started eating sustainable foods as soon as I went to university". Joan has been and is active in many environmental groups, and she said her interest in sustainable food came through being environmentally active: "I think if you get interested in environmental issues then food has to be a part of that awareness".

According to Boström & Klintman (2009: 3), studies show that sustainable consumers may be a quite heterogeneous group in terms of motives and thoughts about alternative products. Hughner et al. (2003) have also found that for people who regularly buy organic food, that is, sustainable consumers, ''organic food consumption is part of a way of life. It results from an ideology, connected to a particular value system, which affects personality measures, attitudes, and consumption behaviour'' (Hughner et al. 2007: 96). Gilg et al. (2005) also showed that committed environmentalists were more likely to hold eco-centric

values, emphasising equality with nature and a need to work with the environment (Gilg et al. 2005: 499). Sustainable consumption was definitely a way of life for most of my informants; they tried their best to live sustainably in other parts of their lives in addition to food consumption, and they showed a concern for nature and the human exploitation of it[8]. But how did they come to be the sustainable consumers they are today?

Backgrounds and upbringing

During my fieldwork, after doing quite a few interviews, I started noticing some similarities in my informants' backgrounds and childhoods, which I argue could have sent them on the path towards becoming sustainable consumers. The first thing I noticed was the importance food had had in nearly all of their childhoods, and how family ties and food were closely connected. Secondly, many of them had discovered or developed a deeper bond to food through travelling to other places, experiencing new tastes and new sensations. Thirdly, focusing on sustainable food in particular, many of them had become aware of the problems with the food system and started to change their eating habits accordingly, through reading books and watching documentaries describing such issues. Let us start at the beginning and explore my informants' early memories of food.

The importance of food and family

While talking about food and their childhoods, many of my informants discovered that they had many early, and joyful, memories of food. Margaret for example said: "I have a lot of memories about food. So I really had a sense very early on of the importance of good food. I mean, that is something I can thank my parents for, especially my mother I suppose. I've always been crazy about

[8] See chapter 5

food". Likewise, Lesley said that all her early memories are of food, and Lisa fondly remembered an early experience she had had with home grown food:

> When I was very little, in the first house we lived in, there was a very big garden with vegetables and fruit, and there were grape vines and fruit trees, and rhubarb. One of my earliest memories is of getting ridiculously excited about mum going out to pick some rhubarb.

More than half of my informants had parents and/or grandparents who grew their own vegetables, introducing them to the pleasures of natural food. Lesley said that her grandparents had been an inspiration, growing food and serving it to her and her family. Likewise, Karolina's grandmother, who had an urban garden where she grew tomatoes and cucumbers and grapes, was a huge inspiration in her life. Thus, Karolina grew up around home-grown vegetables, which "sparked my curiosity and I started exploring on my own". Such early experiences with seeing where food comes from made my informants become interested in food and its provenance. Daniel explained how his father taught him and his brothers to kill their own animals when they were living on a farm in Brazil, teaching them that:

> …you have to know where it comes from... you know, you got to know that it actually used to be an animal, it doesn't just sort of appear in a supermarket. And it's a bit scary the first time you help kill a pig, but if you can't kill it then you shouldn't be allowed to eat it.

All my informants said it had been important for their parents- and in turn for those who were parents themselves- to eat together with their families, which the following quotes illustrate:

> Mealtimes I just remember us sitting together in the evening more than anything, we always ate together. We didn't have a television; we didn't have anything to distract us being together as a family (Margaret).

> I think one of the things that were important was actually eating dinner at the table. We really weren't allowed to eat it off our laps in front of the TV. You know, eating food was a family experience. Sharing a meal together and talking about our day and that sort of social aspect of food as well (Lisa).

> Well, we ate as a family. In those days, you know, we'd come home from work and school and we sat down and we all ate a meal together at like 6.30 in the evening. And on Sundays we all sat down and had proper Sunday lunch together, so we didn't eat meals in front of the TV and people didn't have computers like these days. So yeah, it was very much a family affair and we would visit friends of the family and we would have Sunday lunch together. It was a social thing (Joan).

Eating is, as Joan said, a social affair and it is important when strengthening bonds in diverse social groups. The family is arguably the most integral social group, where the practical experience and emotional significance of cooking and eating together creates peoples' identities and tastes for food (Warde 1997: 184). It was usually the mothers of my informants who cooked most meals when they were growing up, which meant that they "produced the family itself" through the family meal. Women's 'feeding work', according to DeVault, is produced by and produces 'family', it feeds not only household members, but also the family as ideological construct, producing connection and sociability in addition to physical care (DeVault in Warde 1997: 130).

Positive experiences of food early in life, then, made my informants become interested in food and cooking, particularly natural food. They still find food experiences in their childhood an inspiration, like Heather explained:

> I'm inspired to cook because I enjoy it… but it's really from childhood actually. My mum was always cooking, my Nan was always cooking. You go into the house, and the only place you would ever find them was in the kitchen, and they would always be stirring something. So my memories of childhood are filled with brilliant smells of cooking, of jam being made, of roast dinners being

> cooked, and of being outside in amongst nature with my dad. So I got…you know, I had the best of both worlds. And for me food is about family as well… so I love cooking.

While generalising food practices is difficult, in the UK there is generally a fast-food culture, which is demonstrated by the prevalence of pre-prepared foods, microwaves and the power of supermarket chains (Kjærnes et al. 2007). Walking around London you can often smell frying oil from the many fast food outlets. I also have the impression from TV-shows (e.g. Jamie's school meals), radio shows (e.g. Food Programme on BBC radio) and books than many British people are not overly concerned about the quality of food, or bothered to cook from scratch[9]. On the other hand, food for sustainable consumers, my informants included, is a pleasure and experience, not a chore. For these consumers food is seen as something central to their well-being, they are more interested in food and more often talk about food and cooking in their social network compared to non-sustainable consumers (Kjærnes & Torjusen 2012: 96). In addition to emphasising natural and homemade food, sustainable consumers tend to want food to be 'exciting', trying new things rather than familiar food items (Kjærnes & Torjusen 2012: 96). This brings me to the next factor that has influenced my informants' interest in food- namely, travelling and experiencing novel cuisines and tastes.

Experiencing new tastes

The love for food also grows when one experiences new tastes, perhaps from different cuisines, in different countries. Many of my informants explained how they learnt to love food even more through travelling abroad, eating new foods. Lisa said that travelling and "trying new things and new tastes" was something that inspired her, and was part of driving her towards a love of cooking.

[9] This is based on the place one has in society, and to which class one belongs. See further discussions on page 98.

Likewise, Margaret and Catherine also talked about how traveling influenced their food practices:

> When I travelled abroad I was really excited when… for example I went to Israel when I was 19, and there used to be a Saturday buffet at this hotel in the Arab part of Jerusalem, it was a very old fashioned place… and they had an amazing spread of things that people didn't know much about in this country, things like hummus, taramasalata, couscous, ful medames, all sorts of lovely, lovely vegetarian food. So that really influenced me, seeing all these colours, all these different foods in this spread… all so healthy, and it was so tasty. I would say that eating there, at the weekend buffet, really influenced me for life, and I was 19 (Margaret).

> I think actually our food habits changed when we went overseas. So that, say like…we had 4 years in Calcutta, and you know, you learn to be quite imaginative with vegetarian food, a lot of people don't eat meat there, so you learn to cater for all sorts. And then say we were in Sudan where, you know, people on the whole don't have the money to eat much meat, and if you do, you use all bits of the sheep that you've killed. So that was very useful actually, and learning to cook much more with better kinds of rice and be more imaginative. So I think we learnt a lot by being overseas (Catherine).

Experiencing different ways of thinking about and consuming foods in other countries has also made some of my informants think about food issues and change their eating habits. Karolina lived in Italy for a few years with her partner, which is where she really started eating sustainable food on an everyday basis:

> … because there food is very seasonal and it's very like… they really appreciate the fact that it's seasonal. They love their land and their food. Living in Italy showed me a practical way of living sustainably when it comes to food. In New York it was like, more of a concept; it wasn't a way of life.

Likewise, going to French markets and experiencing the way the French relate to their food made Joan look differently at food. She got much more interested in making nice food and using a lot of different ingredients. As she said, compared to shopping at British supermarkets, "if you go to a French market, gosh, it is so beautiful, you know it's so wonderful". Going to markets and shopping at small shops and butchers is a different experience from doing all your shopping at the supermarket. Kjærnes et al. (2007) found a difference between the way consumers shop in Northern and Southern European countries. While in countries like the UK, Norway and Denmark, supermarkets are the most common place to shop for food, in countries like Italy and Portugal people more commonly shop at small-scale, specialised outlets like butchers, fruit and vegetable shops and food markets (Kjærnes et al. 2007: 99). This latter form of shopping relies more on personal and network-based relations, leading to fewer imbalances of power and more emphasis on mutual dependency, in contrast to the impersonal, formal and standardised relations in modern supermarkets. Such small scale shopping practices are, according to Kjærnes et al. (2007) also linked to culinary systems that are based on fresh foods, low degrees of industrial processing and home cooking (Kjærnes et al. 2007: 34-35). The Mediterranean diet has in fact been internationally recognised as a sustainable diet pattern because of the high consumption of vegetables and low consumption of red meat (Ciati & Ruini 2012: 281-282). In Southern countries trust in food is thus based on personal relations between customers and retailers, while in Northern European countries trust is more institutional, which means that you have to trust the whole food system. Trust in the food system is generally quite high in the UK, according to Kjærnes et al. (2007). However, people who do not trust the food system, like my informants, seek out smaller and more personal shopping arenas, like farmers markets. This could also be why Karolina liked the way the Italians shopped and consumed foods while she lived there, and why Joan likes French food markets.

Novelty and new foods have inspired my informants to become interested in food, perhaps leading to an interest in sustainable foods. However, there is a contradiction between foreign cuisines and sustainable foods because foreign cuisines usually require ingredients that are not grown locally. There is also a contradiction between novelty of food and the value of tradition, which is important for many sustainable consumers. This issue will be looked at in greater depth in chapter five. Let us now turn to moments that sparked the interest in sustainable food in particular for my informants.

Becoming aware

Having talked about factors that led my informants to become interested in food and cooking in general, I will now look at how they became interested in sustainable foods in particular. Becoming aware of issues in the main stream food system happened for quite a few of my informants by sustainable foods such as organic food becoming available in shops, which made them curious about what such foods entailed. Lesley started researching what organic food was when she started seeing the word organic on display, and Catherine for example said she started looking into sustainable food

> …actually partly when you were given the alternatives, you know… say at the end of the 20th century nobody thought about something being organic, because you thought your farming practices were sustainable. It was only gradually when people realised that they weren't, at the end of the last century, the 1990s, that the alternatives became available, and you took them.

Realising where the food in supermarkets and green grocers came from sparked some of my informants' interest in local food. When she was a teenager, Heather would look at labels for apples saying they were from New Zealand, which made her think 'why are we importing apples?' Karolina also questioned supermarket food from an early age, questioning why there was so much plastic and why fruit and vegetables in the supermarkets were so perfect and big. Like she said: "I

would look at an apple tree and all the apples were different, and then I'd go to the store and they were shiny and perfect". Likewise, Lesley said:

> I remember being in London, at a greengrocer, you know they have them sort of… in Oxford Street, and they have a really weird mix of stuff from all over the world, and I remember just thinking: 'where does all this come from?' And I think that's really when I started becoming interested in the sustainability of food.

A common process my informants went through after hearing about or reading about issues in the food system was researching it further themselves. Margaret for example is a self-proclaimed research addict and said researching such issues is part of her life. Karolina, too, has always been looking for more information about the issues:

> The whole organic, genetically modified thing that was going on in America just kind of erupted into a lot of information being out there and naturally loving food and loving the process of it all I was just drawn to it. I went to a lot of lectures and expos… So I would go there and keep learning and observing and get information.

Reading popular books that "expose the truth" about the modern food system was also something that made many of my informants change their food habits. Margaret read about the importance of reducing our meat consumption when she was twenty four years old, which made her start to think about her own meat consumption practices. Lisa became a vegetarian at age ten after reading "Diet for a small Planet" (Lappé 1971), which is one of the first published books about the harmful environmental impact of meat production. She read it and went home to her parents and said she was going to be a vegetarian. Lesley started eating less meat when she read about the way animals were treated in a book called "Eating Animals" by Jonathan Safran Foer (2009), which also led her to thoughts of adopting veganism. Foer (2009) explores and exposes practices in factory

farms and commercial fisheries in the United States and examines the cultural meaning of foods. There have been many additional books about problems with modern food provisioning, one important and widely read author being Michael Pollan. His book "The Omnivore's Dilemma"(2006) criticises the American way of eating and explores industrialisation of food and how it creates a dilemma concerning how we choose our food. He also explores the complex relationship between food and society (Pollan 2006). Quite a few of my informants mentioned Pollan as an inspiration. Catherine for example said:

> And through reading various books, you know, there are one or two seminal people, like Michael Pollan, who is showing what has happened in the States, and similar things have happened here. So I think, you know, you just don't want to support those practices. So I think it has gradually... I've been reading, and there has been talking and quite a lot of airing on radio programmes, TV programmes and all that. People like Friends of the Earth have been quite good at exposing those sorts of practices. So yes, there's been a lot of NGO work. I think that's quietly what makes one change, or think about it.

Susannah likewise talked about how reading books changed her perception of food. Being a vegan since her twenties due to animal welfare issues, she used to care only about whether the food she bought was vegan or not. However, through reading various books over the past ten years about the food industry and how supermarkets operate, she started thinking more about how vegetables were grown and the sustainability of the practices in the food industry. She realised that this was something she was complicit in and started looking into exploiting the food around her instead of buying imported or processed foods. Daniel, on the other hand, learnt a lot about sustainable foods from his parents. As he got older he looked into the issues himself, which strengthened his convictions concerning the importance of organic and sustainable food practices:

> I've seen a couple of documentaries on it, read a bit on it, it makes more and more sense the more I think about it. I've never ever seen anything that would

> make me think otherwise. So, firstly the upbringing and then everything I read makes sense. I saw this documentary, Food Inc., which really hit home… no, really hit home. There was so much about that that really clicked; it made so much sense to me.

Documentaries like Food Inc., which "lifts the veil on our nation's food industry, exposing the highly mechanized underbelly that has been hidden from the American consumer" (Food, Inc. 2014), have affected my informants and made them even more aware of the adverse issues in the food industry. The message at the end of the film is that you should eat seasonal, local and organic food to maintain the health of humans, animals and the planet. Margaret also explored sustainability issues through watching documentaries, specifically mentioning the 2005 film "Our Daily Bread", which depicts industrial farming across Europe, showing how technology has made food production a question of efficiency and profit. This film shows clearly that after the industrialisation of food, both animals and plants are produced in mechanistic ways in factories rather than in organic ways on farms. She also mentioned "Symphony of the soil" from 2012 which explores the soil and its qualities and relation to the rest of nature as well as to human beings, highlighting the misuse of the soil in modern agriculture and the effects that misuse has on the environment as a whole.

Information about the industrial food system surfacing in society through documentaries and books, then, made my informants realise what was going on and they then decided to do something about it. However, if they had not already been interested in food and cooking, they probably would not have noticed or searched for such information. Thus there are many factors that make people become sustainable consumers, including their backgrounds, upbringing, values and social background[10].

[10] The significance of social backgrounds will be discussed in chapter 6.

The path to sustainable eating came through a love of food for my informants; a love which started in childhood and has grown throughout their lives by experiencing new pleasures of food and eating together in social groups. Their interest in food led them on to discover and research the adverse effects of the modern food industry, which happened through availability of sustainable foods, reading books and watching documentaries. There seem to be certain people who are more likely to become sustainable consumers, who are more likely to do their own research and buy food they believe is more beneficial to the environment and people, including their own families. These social and cultural factors influencing sustainable consumption will be explored in more detail in chapter six. Let us first look at what motivates my informants to actually go and buy organic, local, seasonal and vegetarian food, and the difficulties they might face as sustainable consumers.

5. Motivations, needs and dilemmas

Now that we know a bit more about how and why my informants became sustainable consumers in the first place, in this chapter I will explore what motivates them to buy and eat sustainable foods, as well as dilemmas they encounter along the way. This is to understand the "why"- part of my research question; why do they buy sustainable foods? What are their motivations, rationales, needs? In this chapter I will be looking at personal motivations and needs, while the next chapter will deal more with social and cultural aspects. First I will look at my informants' motivations for buying sustainable foods before looking into the dilemmas they face as sustainable food consumers. Lastly I will look at three "needs" which I argue drive their food consumption practices- namely, authenticity needs, control needs and social integration needs.

Motivations

Motivations are "the processes that cause people to behave as they do" and occur when a need is aroused that the consumer wishes to satisfy (Guido 2009: 3). According to the sociologist Alan Warde (1997: 8) a reorientation of personal motivations underpins modern, or postmodern, culture. The modern, neo- liberal focus on self-regulation in contemporary Western societies has moved questions of social responsibility away from governments and corporations and on to individuals and their lifestyle choices, creating the responsible "ethical" or "political" consumers discussed earlier (Beagan et al. 2010: 752; Lewis 2008: 227; Kjærnes 2012). Consumption has thus become a way to act morally responsible, where consumers express feelings of responsibility towards society through their purchase behaviour (Torjusen et al. 2004: 77; Vermeir & Verbeke 2006: 170).

The motivations underlying ethical consumption have proven surprisingly complex according to Johnston et al. (2011), who state that there is a large but inconclusive literature on determinants of ethical consumption (Johnston et al. 2011: 296). According to Guido (2009), personal motives can be classified according to individual motives, like health and taste, and selfless motives, like environmental concerns and animal welfare (Guido 2009: 19-20). The Soil Association has found that more than half (55%) of organic shoppers in the UK cite healthy eating as a reason for purchasing organic food while nearly half (44%) are motivated by care for the environment and nature. Taste as well as animal welfare was mentioned by around a third (35% and 33% respectively) (Soil Association 2013: 6). Let us first look at the last two before moving on to health and environmental concerns which have shown to be the most important motivations for sustainable consumers in several studies and for my informants as well.

Several studies have found 'taste' to be among the most important criteria in organic food purchases, presumably because the higher prices of organic foods makes consumers perceive them as being of a better quality and hence better tasting than conventional foods (Hughner et al. 2007: 101-102). Lisa definitely found organic food better-tasting: "…taste as well, you know, it *does* taste better. I mean some of the carrots I've had from my organic veg box have been almost too sweet". However, there have been studies where organic food has been shown to taste the same, or even worse, than conventional foods (Hughner et al. 2007: 101-102). This was something a few of my informants also echoed- Julie for example said: "I don't think actually you can taste the difference", and Catherine said:

> Taste actually… you know if I compare an organic strawberry to a non-organic strawberry, I don't see much difference. And I think there's a study done recently, I've forgotten who by, on organic and non-organic food which said on the whole, your organic food didn't taste much different, although the Soil

> Association would dispute that. And it just depends where it comes from, if your tomatoes come from a mineral rich soil, they will taste different, but not if they don't. So it's not taste. I think it's just a matter of… you just feel good.

However, organic food is not necessarily the same as seasonal food, which was mentioned as a criterion for good tasting food by several of my informants. Buying strawberries in winter, for example, was mentioned by almost all my informants as something they did not do, not only for environmental reasons but because, as Heather said, "they don't taste of anything". Especially fruit and vegetables bought in supermarkets out of season were seen as something that lacked taste. As Joan said: "most of it is picked unripe and transported, and it just doesn't taste or smell of anything, so yeah… I try not to buy stuff out of season, I mean there's not point really, it doesn't taste well, so why would you, it just seems crazy to me". It is evident that taste *is* a motivation for my informants to buy sustainable foods, however, it is often thought of as a positive side-effect rather than a main motivation.

Animal Welfare is, according to Hughner et al. (2007: 102), also a motivation for buying organic food because organic standards include better animal welfare principles, such as a certain amount of space per animal, guaranteed time outside, and natural feeds. All my informants who ate meat said that they do not eat lot of meat, and also buy organic meat or meat from animals they know have been treated well. Heather, a self-proclaimed 'conscious meat-eater', said:

> I very rarely eat meat now unless I know exactly where it's come from, because where I've been in the last sort of 5 or 6 years looking into the provenance of food, apart from being absolutely horrified about the conditions of things, also knowing what animals eat is kind of terrifying. So I don't eat it unless I know where it's come from, what it has eaten itself and how it was slaughtered, which makes eating meat really quite difficult.

The two vegetarians and one vegan in my selection had the strongest motivations from animal welfare. However, it may have been more of a catalyst for becoming vegetarians/vegans while other motivations have become more important or of equal importance over the years, such as environmental concerns (Klintman & Boström 2012: 115). Martin for example became a vegetarian firstly because of animal cruelty in industrial meat production and, as he said "just the fact that I didn't want to rely on killing other creatures for my nutrition". However, since realising that meat consumption also affects the environment, this too has become one of his motivations for being a vegetarian.

According to Hughner et al. (2007: 101), an overwhelming majority of studies find health to be the primary reason consumers buy organic foods, in order to avoid the chemicals and pesticides used in conventional food production, which is perceived to be associated with long-term and unknown adverse effects on health. Mark showed concern about the effects of pesticides on health when he said, "we were vegetarians and inclined to organic for health reasons and sustainability reasons, to avoid all that terrible pesticide stuff". My informants did indeed mention health as a motive for eating sustainable food, rarely as the primary motive but rather as a co-benefit or an interest that might have made them take an interest in sustainable foods in the first place. Margaret said: "…so I didn't start off as a religiously organic, local person. But I was always into healthy, balanced food, because that's how I was brought up". Heather also mentioned health as well as taste as reasons why she became interested in sustainable foods: "I began eating them in my early twenties because I was concerned about health essentially, and taste. They were the big things, nutrient and flavour, and I'm still obsessed with those things". Lesley also mentioned health as a motivator not only for herself, but also as a strategy to make other people eat more sustainable foods:

> Health is one motivator and obviously the environment, but I think to catch peoples' attention it's the health angle. Because at the end of the day I think that

> if people realise that well sourced food is more nutrient dense then that would help solve all the overeating problems, obesity and diabetes.

However, there were also some who did not connect their motivations for buying organic food with health. Catherine said, "you think about health in your balance of your diet, not whether it's organic or not". And when it came to local and seasonal food, health was rarely the number one motivator because, as Margaret said, "well I don't know whether we would be healthier if we could only eat local and seasonal, because maybe we would be lacking certain part of our nutrition that we now have, that cause us to grow bigger and taller". At the same time a few informants did mention how their bodies thrived more when they could eat foods grown in their proper seasons. Clearly health is an important motivator, but it was nearly always mentioned along with concerns for the health of the environment, like when Heather explained that the most important reasons for eating sustainable foods were "the beneficial effect it has on human health and environmental health". According to Kjærnes (2012: 150), there are in fact no necessary opposition between them; concern for our own health may accord with a concern for others or for the physical environment.

Several studies have indicated that environmental concerns are emphasised to a lesser degree than health concerns as motivations for buying sustainable foods, also in the UK (Torjusen et al. 2004: 78; Latacz-Lohmann & Foster 1997: 277; Magnusson et al. 2003). However, all of my informants expressed that they considered environmental concerns the most important motivator, while the other motivations were seen as co-benefits. Andrew illustrates this by saying:

> I probably do it mostly for the environment, something about the future resilience of humanity. There's been lots of studies saying you know organically grown food doesn't have more vitamins and doesn't taste better, personally I think a lot of them are flawed because they don't think through all the other consequences of those foods.

Likewise, Julie said that she identifies with the organic philosophy where "what is important is the effect it has on the environment more than well, 'oh there's more vitamin in this green pepper, it's healthier for me'". The fact that so many studies find personal health instead of environmental concerns as the most important motivator may be because quantitative surveys often do not catch up on the interrelatedness of the different motivational categories, while qualitative studies are able to see that consumers see these themes as interwoven rather than as clear-cut separate types of motivations and concerns (Torjusen et al. 2004: 76). It may of course also be that my informants were influenced by the fact that I was studying environmental issues, so that they highlighted their environmental concerns in the interviews. Nonetheless, personal health and environmental health are often intertwined, as mentioned, and cannot be neatly separated, and often also include aspects of taste, animal welfare and social issues (Kjærnes 2012: 150). As Burlingame (2012) writes, the health of humans cannot be separated from the health of ecosystems. In fact, the foods that are regarded as healthy, with higher recommended consumption levels, are also those with lower environmental impact (Ciati & Ruini 2012: 281). Thus the various motivations are overlapping and interrelated, which Daniel expressed when he explained what he saw as sustainable food:

> Sustainable food is something where you don't damage anything along the way. So you don't damage me, you don't damage the chicken, the land that's there, you haven't got like a monoculture, you haven't poisoned the river, that kind of stuff. Sustainability for me is something where you haven't harmed anything along the way, which means that you can keep doing it.

Martin also realised that things are interconnected, that harming the environment will also harm us: "…sustainability is so important, we can't go on ruining the soil by over fertilizing and putting chemicals down all the time and it gets run off into streams and so on, which affects wildlife and eventually affects us". Likewise, Mark said that most of his worries are about the environment, about

climate change, because that is the immediate disaster, and that is why he buys locally. The environment, then, was seen by many if not all of my informants as the overlapping concern affecting everything else. Through their research in Canada on ethical eating, Johnson et al. (2011) also found through in depth interviews with consumers that environmental considerations were a predominant element of ethical eating repertoires (Johnston et al. 2011: 301). According to Beagan et al. (2010), ethical consumers are consumers who consider "the wellbeing of loved ones as well as wellbeing of people and the environment in a more global sense" when making purchasing decisions (Beagan et al. 2010: 763). My informants indeed displayed a sense of global responsibility towards the future of the planet and the state of the environment, which the following quotes illustrate:

> …if we don't change our relationship and our awareness to the way that we consume, which is the biggest part of how we interact with society, our children are not going to have enough food to eat, and maybe not even a planet (Karolina).

> I think we need a balance between our needs and the needs of the environment, we need biodiversity, I think we need to support the bees. We need to realise how much we have decimated in terms of planetary resources, and we need to stop because it's like a rollercoaster, will we be able to stop in time? I'm not even sure we can. But I want to be one of the ones who put the brakes on (Margaret).

> If I want to live on the planet without making things worse for the rest of the planet, for other humans, other people in the human species and in the animal species and the plant species, I got to have less impacts, less destructive impacts on the planet. So I think it's basically about enjoying my life without particularly having to destroy anyone else's life (Susannah).

> The most important reason for consuming sustainable foods is the future of the planet, actually. I think it's the whole sort of… gamut of it. You know, we're

> quite irresponsible for this planet I suppose, and I don't want my kids to see a planet which is depleted. Yes, I think it's that sense of responsibility really (Catherine).
>
> So yes, it's a weird thing, industrialisation, and you know the, in fact it's not only the environmental degradation that it causes, but there are rivers that I swam in as a child that, or drank the water from, that you just can't go in now. It's full of all sorts of 'nasties', parasites and bacteria and things (Lisa).

It is evident that by the way my informants expressed themselves, environmental concerns were the strongest motivator for buying sustainable foods, although it was closely intertwined with other concerns. Food safety and supporting the local economy are motivations I haven't explicitly mentioned here because I will get back to them under the subchapters 'control needs' and 'social integration needs' respectively. Of course, along with these personal motivations, factors such as price, accessibility and convenience are also important when it comes to food choices[11] (Weatherell et al. 2003: 234). While sustainable eating is a way my informants and other sustainable consumers can show concern and take responsibility for global issues, it is not always easy to do in today's society which is ripe with multiple food choices with different effects on the environment. As Halkier (2001) says, "the ways in which consumers handle environmental considerations in consumption are characterized by ambivalence, multiple meanings, dilemmas and negotiations" (Halkier 2001a: 802). How do my informants experience these dilemmas, and how do they prioritise when they try to eat in a sustainable manner?

[11] This I will get into in chapter six

Dilemmas of sustainable eating

In the settings that the sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991) call 'high' or 'late' modernity, people have to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options, reflexively and continuously sustaining and revising their biographical narratives (Giddens 1991: 3; Beck 1992; Johnston 2008: 242). Consumption practices also help create and sustain such narratives: through having a vast number of choices consumers can shape their self-concept and create an identity. For example, if one's conscience is troubled by environmental degradation, one has a choice to buy organically produced goods (Johnston 2008: 244). However, while the individualisation of modern society makes people become more reflective and able to think critically about their own practices, this society is also more complex, risky and differentiated, causing people to become more dependent on expert systems (Boström & Klintman 2009: 7; Giddens 1990). By expert systems, Giddens (1990) means systems of professional expertise that organise large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today, and which influence many aspects of what we do in a continuous way (Giddens 1990: 27). Eco and fair trade labels may be seen as an expert system that environmentally and ethically conscious people can choose to trust or not to trust (Boström & Klintman 2009: 7). The many options and competing expert knowledge sustainable consumers face in their everyday shopping and eating practices, creates difficult choices and dilemmas.

Due to individualisation and the complexity of modernity, people need more and more advice about how to live their lives in order to make better choices, but face dilemmas as they get contradictory advice from different experts (Boström & Klintman 2009: 7). When it comes to food consumption, large quantities of information about what and how one should eat undermine the legitimacy of any traditionally dominant set of rules. "The state through its nutrition policies, the food industries through their advertising and the cultural intermediaries through

the mass media all offer alternative guidance" (Warde 1997: 188). Like Karolia said: "There's too much different information out there". This leads to scepticism and uncertainty, and knowing what to do becomes more difficult (Halkier 2001a: 803). Heather illustrated this feeling of uncertainty when she said:

> I think there are a lot of personal barriers, we've been told so much over the years and been given so much conflicting information, so things like… one minute wine is really bad for you, then the next minute it helps cure heart disease. You know, all of this ridiculous conflicting information.

As a result of such contradictory advice, people today might become uncertain and ambivalent. According to Boström & Klintman (2009), sustainable consumers are among the most ambivalent and uncertain consumers as the feeling of responsibility and consumer power is accompanied by the uncertainty of knowing exactly what to do and of knowing if one's actions really lead to positive environmental and social consequences (Klintman & Boström 2012: 118; Boström & Klintman 2009: 7). This last point was illustrated by Mark when he answered my question of whether he thought he was making a difference by consuming the way he does:

> No. I don't think anything that I do actually makes a difference, I think it is somewhere between ironic and desperate. And you know, the stuff that I don't eat, somebody else eats instead, if I don't drive a car somebody else could drive a bigger car on the same street. So it's a bit depressing.

Particularly choosing between buying local and buying organic often leads to negotiations and dilemmas. Like mentioned in chapter 1, 'conventionalisation' of organic foods may lead to a loss of its original and intrinsic values and qualities (Vittersø et al. 2005: 3). A lot of the organic food that can be bought, especially in supermarkets, have been imported, sometimes from the other side of the globe, causing large amounts of CO2-emissions from 'food miles'. My informants' accounts showed that they were concerned about this. Margaret said:

> …if I have a choice between organic, from let's say Peru, you know, asparagus from Peru, or non-organic from just north of London, like Hartfordshire, well I will get the non-organic because I want to buy local. Local is more important in the long run.

However, local food does not necessarily mean more sustainable food, because such food can also be intensively farmed or grown in hot houses, as Lisa says: "I mean local is up there, but it's local within reason, you know, appropriately produced local food, so you know… I'm not going to buy hot house tomatoes out of season". The meaning of the word local is also difficult to pin down, as local can mean from the same city, from within England, or even from within Europe to some. Catherine said that local to her actually means Europe, because if you want fruits like oranges and melons you have to get it from southern European countries. In addition, local food may be harvested locally, but then brought to distribution centres and back again to local shops, contributing to CO2 being released via transport. This was a concern for Martin: "I do live on the very edge of Greater London and a lot of the food that I do purchase is locally grown. Although it may have been taken to a distribution centre many miles away and brought back again". Furthermore, some crops grown in England cause the same or more CO2-emissions than similar crops grown in more southern countries. Susannah for example prefers to buy organic Spanish olive oil instead of English rapeseed oil:

> With Spanish olive oil, the trees don't need much maintenance; most of them don't even need irrigation. It's a very, very sustainable form of agriculture. If I buy rapeseed oil or something from England it involves a lot of machinery and planting on fields, disturbing the soil, it's not usually organic, there are lots of pesticides, and there are lots of fertilisers. So I actually read a study that said that the carbon footprint is about the same for Spanish olive oil and English rapeseed oil, because the importation of olive oil is cancelled out by the load it puts, the actual agriculture.

Thus there is a complex trade-off to be made between organic and local produce (Seyfang 2006: 391). Lesley explains why she would choose organic over local: "I just feel, especially if it's Soil Association, which is the standard here, I know the standards are really high and I trust them. Whereas when you get local sometimes you just don't know how it's grown, so it can be local and factory farmed". Mark struggled with choosing between organic and local, but said that he would prioritise local most of the time. Likewise, Susannah will choose local over organic because, as she said, "you can get your local farmers to become organic, but you can't get your organic farmers anywhere else to become local".

Food miles are not the only issue surrounding organic food. The conventionalisation of organic food means that an 'industrial organic' sector has emerged, which means that organic food can sometimes be grown intensively in monocultures. Heather said:

> Unfortunately the supermarket organics is overpriced, it's travelled thousands of food miles, and it's still grown in monocultures. I have a real problem with some certified organic farms because the methods are pretty much the same as conventional, so I'm more interested in beyond organic in terms of holistic farming rather than having a monocrop of wheat that just happens to be organic.

Likewise, Lisa expressed: "And even organic is produced on, you know it's industrial organic now. So what do you do? How do you choose your food? It becomes difficult". As Torjusen et al. (2004) posits, there may be a structural incompatibility in the UK between how supermarkets understand and deal with organic food and how consumers perceive and valuate organic food, the former focusing on the appearance of food (size and shape), while the latter is concerned with environmental and health benefits (Torjusen et al. 2004: 83).

However, even alternative sales channels and products usually exist in the context of globalised commercialised food systems, which means that it "might not necessarily provide the qualities of proximity and locally embedded

knowledge that are sometimes assumed to be part and parcel of these forms of distribution" (Torjusen et al. 2004: 44). Planet Organic is an organic supermarket chain in London that expresses sustainable values: "We believe wholeheartedly that safe, seasonal and sustainable organic food is fundamental to good health and natural vitality" (Planet Organic 2012). However, my informants expressed opinions that not even an alternative, organic chain like Planet Organic was always the best choice, with Mark for example saying, "While we got a Planet Organic 50 yards from our house now, we tend not to go there because it tends to be things that say they're organic that are packaged and processed". Hence they have to weigh up the environmental impacts from packaging, the impact of food miles, the uncertainty of whether organic foods are industrially produced or not, and whether local food is actually sustainably produced. My informants all expressed that they find the choices and the different dilemmas difficult, as Mark illustrated when he answered the question of how he prioritised when buying foods with: "Oh, with agony!". The following quotes show how my informants felt about the dilemmas of sustainable eating:

> Obviously if it is both local and organic I would completely have it, and if I've grown it myself I'm even happier, you know. So actually you have to weigh up every time you buy something, you're thinking, yeah, should I have that one? Or that one? Or should I just grow it myself? (Margaret).

> …you do have to be really interested, and do a lot of reading. And even when you've done that you still don't always know what the right thing is to do. I must admit that sometimes I do go with flavour over sustainability, so yeah I think it is very difficult for people (Lisa).

> I mean if there's no alternative, sometimes for example, if an organic thing is super- expensive and it's from South-Africa, I might get a British apple instead. So the British apple would be conventional, but it's half the price and it hasn't flown all the way from South-Africa, and I know if it gets shipped all the way

> from South-Africa it gets treated in some way even if it's organic, to keep it fresh or whatever kind of thing, which is again not as good (Daniel).
>
> Generally I choose organic first, but I will not buy organic apples from New Zealand, it makes no sense, so it's a balancing act between all three (organic, local, seasonal) and it becomes quite difficult. If I can get at least chemical free, it doesn't have to be organic, but if they're chemical free from Essex and in season, then I'm very happy (Heather).
>
> I think it's always there in the back of the mind, so I would go for something that's organic if I had the choice, something which is local if I had the choice, so I on the whole won't buy beans from Kenya or tomatoes from Saudi Arabia. But on the other hand, quite illogically, I will buy butter from New Zealand. Except I think the Kenyan beans are flown, and the butter comes by ship, but on the other hand, I'm not quite sure if that's better. So one tries one's best, but it's not always easy (Catherine).

There are clearly desires to avoid buying foods flown from across the world for most of my informants. However, yet another issue emerges when the responsibility and care for distant others enter into it. Martin said:

> I'd rather have seasonal foods than have stuff imported from other countries… On the other hand you have to look at it…you are making employment for people in other countries. A lot of African countries are absolutely dependent on the trade that they get, even though it means a lot of air miles and transport cost to get the stuff to our markets.

However, one could argue that climate change and environmental effects will be felt earlier and more severely in the same distant countries, so eating local foods instead of imported foods might help in that respect, which is a thought Joan expressed: "I won't buy organic if it's been flown in from somewhere else. I mean I know there's a whole argument about, you know, providing currency in places like Kenya and things like that, but I think buying European or British is

more important than buying organic". Hence ethical consumers have to weigh up not only the environmental effects their food choices may cause, but also any effects not buying something will have on distant others.

As shown, my informants found it difficult to eat sustainably because there are so many different food choices that may lead to different adverse impacts for the environment or for societies. Michael Pollan has called this the "omnivore's dilemma", which means that when there are so many food options available to you, especially in today's complex food systems, it becomes difficult to choose what eat (Pollan 2006: 3-5). Of course, if the food is both organic and local, which necessarily also means seasonal, that was the best thing. But to get hold of such foods in the hassles of everyday life is not always easy. Some compromises and choices had to be made, sometimes with agony, like Mark said. Their desire to protect the environment almost always seemed to be the most important reasoning for their choices. But I argue that there are also other needs that encourage them to consume sustainably, which I will look at next.

The needs that drive sustainable food consumption

Guido (2009) has identified three needs that he argues drive ethical consumption in general. I will use these needs to show why consumers choose to consume sustainable foods, which means slightly altering them from the way Guido uses them. The first needs I will look at are 'control needs', the necessity (or illusion) of having control over every-day activities and facts of life which one dislikes or fears (like fear of eating harmful, mass-produced foods). The second group of needs are 'social integration needs'- the desire to feel part of a group which shares your beliefs and values- and the third and arguably most important group of needs are 'authenticity needs', a search for the genuine and the return to traditional modes of eating (Guido 2009: 4).

Control needs

The sociologists Anthony Giddens (1991) and Ulrich Beck (1992) claim that society in this period of late modernity is what Beck calls a *risk society*. It is the destructive, unintended side-effects of modernisation that create the risk society's risks, through the development of new technologies, globalisation and industrial processes (Beck 1992: 3, 21). According to Giddens (1991: 4), modern risks are high-consequence risks compared to risks in earlier times; they are no longer personal and immediate, but global and disconnected from time and place, with ecological disaster being a particularly significant example. In addition, hazards are often not perceptible to the senses, like toxins and harmful substances in foodstuffs, even less so in the non-transparent, complex modern food system (Beck 1992: 21). Such risks, as well as growing reflexivity and individualised responsibilities, lead to uncertainty and distrust among food consumers (Kjærnes 2012: 153; Kjærnes & Torjusen 2012: 86). I argue that this leads to 'control needs', the necessity or illusion of having control over every-day activities and facts of life that one dislikes or fears. Concerning food consumption, this means that sustainable consumers choose to buy 'safe' organic foods from localised and independent retailers instead of 'risky' conventional foods bought from large supermarkets.

The long and complex food supply chains in the modern food system keep the production history of food hidden from consumers because every time a food product changes hands, almost all information of the former owner is lost (Coff 2006: 28). As Giddens (1990: 33) says, "the prime condition of requirements for trust is not the lack of power, but lack of full information". As modern food production is increasingly left to the industry instead of individuals' kitchens, there is a lack of first-hand knowledge about the food we eat (Bugge 1995: 179). Like Kjærnes (2012: 152) says, we are dependent on systems over which we have less control than ever in terms of decisions as well as knowledge. This leads

to distrust among consumers towards the modern food system, a sentiment that Karolina expressed:

> I believe that companies or organisations that monitor the food production of our world are not as honest as they say they are, and I've seen that evidence. Even as a chef, like I've seen how food can be manipulated to make it seem good. So I don't trust it. What we're eating, we might as well eat Styrofoam. I mean it tastes great, I think we're really addicted to the flavour of things and we have almost been manipulated to that whether it has to do with the salt or the sweetness of the sugar... I don't know. I'm just afraid.

Food system scandals within the European agro-food system like BSE, foot and mouth disease, and the horsemeat scandal of early 2013, make consumers increasingly critical about food quality and safety. The BSE crises made some of my informants think about issues in the food system and start to change their food consumption practices. Margaret for example said: "Well, the BSE crises kind of made me start thinking about other related issues to do with food and sustainability and how animals are reared and so on". In the wake of such scandals, noticeable changes in peoples' attitudes to food occur along with an increased interest in organic food and alternative food provisioning outlets (Torjusen et al. 2004: 45). According to FARMA (the National Farmers' Retail and Markets Association), six months after the horsemeat scandal, only 42% of the British population believed the food industry was able to effectively react to food scares like BSE and horsemeat, showing that almost half of the British population do not trust the food industry (FARMA 2013). The horsemeat scandal also had a positive impact on organic sales. According to the Soil Association, in February 2013 total supermarket organic sales increased to their highest level in 9 months, indicating that consumers choose to buy organic as a "guarantee of integrity" (Soil Association 2014). FARMA's statistics also suggest that more consumers will now turn to products with a focus on provenance, as 37% of

consumers disagree that supermarkets are aware of where their ingredients come from (FARMA 2013). My informants echoed these findings. Lisa said:

> I was actually really surprised by the horsemeat scandal, because I really thought the supermarkets had a handle on their supply chains, and I think the supermarkets thought that too. So it was really quite a big surprise to everyone, cause I really thought they had traceability in their supply chains.

A general distrust in supermarkets was expressed by quite a few of my informants. Even though supermarkets are now selling organic, local and fair trade foods, some of my informants believed that they were only doing this because they have realised that enough people want it so that they can make money on it. Consumers are typically quite distrustful towards big supermarket chains and their ecological campaigns, according to Klintman & Boström (2012). Andrew expressed such distrust when he said, "…it's quite easy, even in Sainsbury's, to buy organic carrots. However, there are some things that claim to be organic, like seeds and nuts, but they're produced in America, and I'm going 'I'm not totally sure I believe that'". Statistics on consumer trust indeed shows that while consumers have fairly high trust in eco-labelled food, when organic is seen as being close to the experience of the supermarkets, it too becomes distrusted (Klintman & Boström 2012: 118). Some of my informants were sceptical towards the supermarket selling organic food:

> I think they've been forced. But they're still quite feeble, it's hit and miss. They all now sell organic or fair-trade bananas because there was a lot of public protest about the way they were sourcing their bananas. Then the supermarkets realised that people were quite anxious to buy this… Supermarkets are very often behind public opinion. Now they're saying buy British, which is only half the battle, so it's so stupid (Catherine).

> All they want is my custom and they will do anything they can to get my custom… So they will sell me vegan food on this aisle, and they will sell foie

> gras on that aisle, they'll sell me organic food here, and they'll sell imported beans from Kenya there. They don't have any kind of moral stance, they just adopt… in different aisles, they will adopt whatever kind of moral stance they… they will reflect back to the customer whatever the customer wants. They don't have any ethics of their own; all they want is market domination. And they're getting it (Susannah).

Even stores that have the image of being sustainable and ethical cannot always be trusted, like Planet Organic mentioned earlier, or Whole Foods Market. Their motto is "Whole Foods, Whole People, Whole Planet", which according to their website emphasises that their vision reaches beyond just being a food retailer, but includes "improvement on the state of the environment and local and larger community support" (Whole Foods Market 2013). However, the product choices at Whole Foods market are vast, and they stock conventional produce in addition to their environmentally friendly and healthy food (Johnston 2008: 250). There is thus an ideological imbalance, as Johnston (2008) calls it, where consumers "shop in an environment that frames WFM consumers as ethical, healthy, and environmentally conscientious – even though the consumer might end up at the check-out with imported Chilean raspberries, a heavily processed and packaged "organic" meal imported from thousands of miles away, and a box of General Mills Cereal" (Johnston 2008: 251-252). The store focuses on giving consumers large amounts of choice at the expense of their own ecological values, as is typical for profit-maximising supermarket chains, this profit-orientation making it hard to retain such ethical values (Johnston 2008: 259). This ideological imbalance leads to distrust in the store as an ethical place to shop, which Margaret illustrated when she said:

> I mean there are these mega businesses like Whole Foods Market, which has had some bad press because they actually have got GM in quite a lot of their products. Their halo is slightly tarnished, so it's very hard to trust anything that gets big and makes money. I personally never go to Whole Foods Market, even if

> I lived next door to it, I am slightly disgusted by it because the sheer range and quantity of stuff they have there, and a lot of the stuff is not local… It's air-conditioned, it's got 300 kinds of different cheeses, and you know… 50 kinds of different bread. Yeah it's just too much, and you could spend a fortune in there without even thinking about it.

As a way of regaining control and finding alternatives to the modern, industrialised food system, consumers might (re-)turn to personal relations, for example by buying meat from a familiar butcher or a local farmer rather than pre-packaged in a supermarket (Torjusen et al. 2004: 43; Kjærnes 2012: 154-155). Andrew expressed this wish: "I think there's definitely something about having a good relationship with the supplier or the grower, so some of the farmers' market stuff is really good because of that". Almost all of my informants got some of their food from such alternative outlets, like farmers' markets and box schemes, but many also shopped at supermarkets. However, they were all interested in where their food came from, no matter where it was bought. According to the Soil Association 2014 organic market report, independent outlets saw a 6.9% increase in sales, covering box schemes, mail order, farm and health-food shops and farmers' markets, showing that consumers increasingly choose alternative sources to regain control and are looking for a deeper connection to the production values behind their food (Soil association 2014: 8). Sustainable eaters, then, buy sustainable foods to regain control over what they eat due to distrust towards the conventional food system. As mentioned, one aspect of regaining control is that they want to have a closer relationship with the producers of their food, to know where the food comes from. This also strengthens local social relationships, which is an important part of the next set of needs, namely social integration needs.

Social integration needs

According to Warde (1997) "modernity is perceived to destroy the natural rootedness and uncomplicated sense of belonging which village life in traditional societies engendered" (Warde 1997: 183). This lack of rootedness can also be seen in the disconnected industrial food system, which creates 'social integration needs', the desire to feel connected to a community, to be part of a social group that shares your beliefs, in a fragmented and individualised modern society. As Warde (1997) says, to be part of a community is an aspiration widely held in modern societies, and attempts are thus constantly being made to restore, recreate or invent communities. Because food is more firmly socially embedded than many other items of consumption, the attempts at its further re-embedding are particularly marked (Warde 1997: 183-184). In addition, even though the act of eating is individualistic, the social meal binds individuals together in a community and common identity, possessing the ability to institute solidarity and community feeling (Coff 2006: 14). Hence food might be seen as offering a special opportunity to re-link with the local community or to create new real or imagined communities (Kjærnes 2012: 154; Warde 1997).

Among sustainable food consumers there is a desire to support and strengthen the local economy and community including growing connections to where the food has come from and enhancing social connections (Seyfang 2006: 390; Johnston et al. 2011: 303). Some consumers, then, choose to buy local food not on the grounds of price, convenience or ethical issues like environmental concerns and animal welfare, but rather are seeking to (re-) create relationships with farmers and food producers as well as local retailers, relationships based on reciprocity, trust and shared values (Weatherell et al. 2003: 234). They do this by supporting businesses in their local community, buying food from farmer's markets or farm shops, or buying local, organic foods through box schemes or other localised outlets (Johnston et al. 2011: 303). I have already mentioned that my informants

preferred to use such alternative food provisioning systems, and they also expressed desires to support local independent retailers. Heather explained that she in addition to buying sustainable food for the environment, also cares about the social aspects of such foods, and wants local farmers to thrive. Likewise, Susannah said:

> I mainly try to buy food at the shop at the bottom of the road, which is an independent shop, but they're not a great shop, they're more interested in selling overpriced, over packaged… but I want to have some independent shops. We had three independent health food shops within walking distance of my house, all three closed in the last five years. And this is like the only one left, so I want to support them.

Another reason for using alternative outlets is thought to be due to the social networks that are often established in relation to them. It is characteristic of some consumers who buy food from producer collectives that they are also part of a social network of like-minded people (Torjusen et al. 2004: 43). "Growing Communities" is one such community-led network in North London. It runs an organic box scheme, a weekly farmers' market, organic urban market gardens which also provide training for apprentice growers and volunteers, and a patchwork farm. As they say themselves on their website: "All our projects are steps towards Growing Communities' aim of creating a more sustainable, re-localised food system - changing what we eat, how we eat and how it's farmed" (Growing Communities 2013). Heather is involved with many such networks, including Growing Communities, which she had this to say about: "there's definitely a community vibe, cause whenever you go to something you see all the same people, so yeah, but it's great, I really, really enjoy it and feel like you get a lot of support from it".

Such local networks involve face-to-face relations and provide a basis for exchange of opinions, clarification, negotiation and the accumulation of

knowledge about food (Torjusen et al. 2004: 43). Catherine is a member of Sustainable Haringey, "an independent informal network for everybody wanting to make Haringey more sustainable" (Sustainable Haringey 2013), through which she can communicate with like-minded others, exchange thoughts about food and learn about food issues through talks and conversations:

> There are quite a lot of talks about sustainable foods... yeah some are interesting, some aren't. So it's a relatively hot topic actually. And Sustainable Haringey has all sorts of different groups, growing things, exchanging seeds, seed swaps. There's another sustainability group which has talks on all sorts of aspects of sustainability, including food and what's going on in other parts of London. And that's interesting… so it raises those questions and makes you think.

It has been claimed that people may create imagined communities in seeking to compensate for the lack of a sense of belonging associated with the excessive individualism of modern society (Warde 1997: 13). Social integration needs, then, might lead to the creation of an 'imagined community' of sustainable consumers, where like-minded others share a consciousness, values, and a sense of 'us' being set apart from others (Beagan et al. 2010: 754). When I visited Daylesford Organic farm in Gloucestershire, I noticed that people greeted me with 'hello' and 'hi' when I walked by, which is not common in London. These people were probably from London or other bigger cities, as it is these urban consumers Daylesford is advertising itself to. This might show that they felt that being there at the organic farm showed that we shared some values and ideas about how one should eat. Communities for sustainable consumers are more based on similarity in goals for food systems and a concept of local or national political economy, rather than geographic proximity, ethnic identity, family ties or 'roots' (Beagan et al. 2010: 763). Like Lesley said: "I feel like I'm in this bubble and I'm surrounded by a lot of people who are very ethical and very

sustainable". Or Susannah who has created her current social group through such communities:

> So a lot of the friends I have now I've actually met through sustainability groups, mainly through food growing projects and one of the reasons we've all been there is because we're all interested in sustainability and growing food in London, it's quite a basic tenant.

Weatherell et al. (2003) argue that classic determinants of food choice (social class, income) are eroding in importance in developed countries. Instead, consumers are re-grouping into new, specialised and more intricate small communities or 'neo-tribes', which are elective groupings to which people are intensely, but temporarily, attached, whose boundaries are identifiable through the shared lifestyles, values and self-images of members (Warde 1997: 16; Weatherell et al. 2003: 234). Joan explained how a network of like-minded people is important for her:

> Because I feel so strongly about environmental issues it has become very important to me to spend most of my time with like-minded people. Fortunately for me in the locality there's a very active sustainability group, and yeah I spend most of my evenings at meetings with them really, so that's good because otherwise I find it a bit depressing to be with people who don't care very much about these things

According to Weatherell et al. (2003), evidence suggests that the majority of UK consumers only have a vague understanding of wider rural issues, often prefer not to contemplate the origins of the foods they eat, and have generally negative perceptions of farmers, which means that neo-tribes are groupings that can be distinguished from the wider UK public (Weatherell et al. 2003: 234). In the study conducted by Weatherell et al. (2003), they found that people who were in ethical communities like 'neo-tribes' came from demographically diverse groupings, reflecting a freedom in modern society to make food choices on the

basis on factors other than traditional determinants such as social class or income[12]. They also found that ethical consumers still expressed pragmatic priorities, as my informants also did, for example by worrying about personal health implications or shopping at supermarkets. The fact that such trade-offs takes place between wider concerns and pragmatic factors echoes the theory of neo-tribes as fluid and temporary (Weatherell et al. 2003: 243). Social integration needs, then, occur as ethical consumers are searching for a community of like-minded others who share their values and ethical and political motivations for sustainable living.

Authenticity needs

The rise of individualisation and globalisation has reduced the authority of tradition to guide the actions of individuals and communities, and processes of social alienation have weakened interpersonal, neighbourly bonds (Beagan et al. 2010: 753; Lewis 2008: 228). The sociologist Alan Warde says: "the predicament, a problem of modernity and postmodernity, is the requirement that individuals construct their own selves" (Warde 1997: 10). People no longer have a set place in society by way of lineage, caste or class, instead each must self-reflexively and consciously create a personal identity and construct their own biographies (Warde 1997: 10; Beagan et al. 2010: 753; Beck 1992: 135). While leading to more flexibility and freedom for individuals, cultural norms about what should be eaten when and with whom disappears (Kjærnes 2012: 151; Beagan et al. 2010: 752). Because of the globalised and generalised industrial food system, food choices are progressively less influenced by the local cultural heritage and a suited integration in the environment (Lairon 2012: 32). This might lead to 'authenticity needs', where people eating sustainable foods do this to regain some authenticity in their lives, a rootedness which is missing in modern, individualised and alienated lives.

[12] See page 86-87

The concept of authenticity evokes a range of meanings- that which is original, genuine, real and true. It is defined against the inauthentic and artificial, against modern 'mass' culture (Pratt 2007: 293). As mentioned earlier, the mainstream food system has created a disconnect between growers and consumers, often hiding where the food actually comes from, how it has been produced, and by whom. This has made food consumption an alienated and often individualised experience. Most of my informants expressed concern about this dissociation to the land and the growers, and wanted to buy local food from people they knew. Heather said: "I really like to buy local foods, know who my farmer is, know who my grower is, and grow my own food when I can". When I was observing at farmers' markets in London I noticed that there was quite a lot of interaction between the farmers and the customers. Many customers seemed very interested in how the animals had been treated and where the produce had come from. Buying sustainable food, then, often expresses a desire to avoid intensive agriculture and grow a new sense of connection with the land and the people who grow your food through a concern for the authenticity and provenance of the food we eat (Seyfang 2006: 386; Pratt 2007: 295).

Rationalised food production practices, the rise of the food industry and food science, have led to an anonymisation of food items through logistics and technology (Coff 2006: 90; Kjærnes 2012: 90). The packed, wrapped and labelled food in supermarkets has distanced consumers' relationship to the food they buy because most of the time they are unable to sufficiently sense the food before they buy it (Coff 2006: 90). Instead, the label has central significance for how products are judged and for the qualities ascribed to them (Torjusen et al. 2004: 36). Karolina expressed concern about this when she talked about the first time she walked in to a supermarket in the UK:

> I got freaked out by the amount of packaging, everything was portioned, everything was in plastic. You know you go into a store like Waitrose, which people perceive as a high end supermarket, and you have 4 tomatoes in plastic, 4

> potatoes in plastic. Everything is quite dissociated from where it comes from, the land, the whole natural aspect of it, it has been transformed.

There has indeed been a cultural distancing to the natural origin of food; it no longer comes into the kitchens directly from the fields. "What comes into the kitchen today is not dead animals with skin, hair, eyes and entrails, or carrots with green leaves and soil on them, the food that comes into the kitchen today is less natural and more cultivated" (Coff 2006: 87). Among my informants there was a wish to eat more natural foods, and certainly vegetables that "have soil on them", that they had either grown themselves, or bought straight from a farmer. They wanted natural foods that had not been cosmetically perfected and standardised, as Margaret expressed:

> You need stuff that's small and doesn't look so perfect, you want misshapen tomatoes, ugly apples, people need to get used to eating things that don't look so cosmetically perfect. So it's all about lowering your expectations, but people don't want to.

The focus on the 'natural' in food consumption can be seen as a critique against the industrial society's use of nature (Bugge 1995: 170). In modern science, cultivation of the wild nature has played a crucial role in attempting to control nature, enhancing security and predictability for humans. However, the side effects of industrial societies have become more visible and have led to uncertainty about the future. Modern food production is a typical example of cultivated nature, where the future effects of artificial fertilisers, additives and pesticides are uncertain. Following this, the natural has become a word of honour among modern, urban people, my informants included (Bugge 1995: 164). This valuing of the natural is according to Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) due to a fear of ecological disasters which have become more prominent in people's minds in today's risk society.

Because food is now transported from around the world, the practices of cooking have lost its relation to seasons and spaces. “There is always some place on earth where new potatoes can be harvested and transported to our kitchens” (Coff 2006: 87). The emancipation of cooking from time and space means more opportunities and less constraints, but it also causes a rupture with a more local and corporal relation to food, leading to an isolation from the local context, from local time and space (Coff 2006: 88). To live according to the seasons was an important aspect of sustainable food consumption for my informants, and the aspect they most associated with eating in a more traditional and authentic way and feeling more connected to the land and traditional way of life. Heather illustrated this when she said:

> I love seasonal food because it’s a pleasure of that season. We don’t live in a seasonal world anymore, in that we have electrical lighting and heating. So I like seasonal food because it reminds me of the changing seasons and the changing year. So I look forward to eating English apples in September to December. For me seasonal food is the joy of being in touch with the rhythms of the seasons.

Hugh Fearnley- Whittingstall is a major advocate of eating seasonally, and preferably home grown food, and he was mentioned as an inspirational figure by many of my informants. In one of his many “River Cottage” shows, “River Cottage Spring”, he says:

> Unfortunately now that so much of what we eat comes wrapped in plastic from the supermarket, most of us have forgotten what seasonability looks, smells and tastes like. Learning to grow my own food changed my life forever, and for the better. It’s not just about eating well, it’s about feeling connected to the land and the seasons.

Growing their own food was indeed something which taught my informants more about what seasonal food is, like Andrew said, “because we do grow some of our own food, we get a better sense of what seasonal is”. Lesley learnt about

the pleasure of waiting for her food when she started gardening, for example having to wait a month for a carrot, which "makes you value food more when you step away from the supermarkets, because you can't have what you want when you want it". Most of my informants mentioned that eating seasonally made them appreciate the food more- having to wait for certain foods rather than being able to get the same food all year around in the supermarket. Karolina talked about how when she lived in Italy, she lived according to the seasons to a much greater extent, an experience that heightened her love of food:

> When artichokes are in season they are everywhere, you are eating them all the time, but when the season is over you are not going to see them until next year and you appreciate that. You know, there's always this element of anticipation and true pleasure and rapture with your food rather than with…We take food for granted in the big societies.

Andrew also made the point that foods should be about enjoying them in their proper seasons when he said: "if you eat strawberries any time, what's the point of strawberries almost… strawberries are about summer". To Margaret, eating for example strawberries in summer rather than year round was about accepting nature's limits:

> I think this is the way we evolve and this is how the human race originally had to live according to the seasons. And we've gone away from this, we have tried to bend nature to our own ends, and it's actually backfiring in our face now. So what we need to do is reluctantly accept that there are limits, and one way to understand that there are limits is to actually realise that sourcing your food locally and seasonally may not be as much fun as eating strawberries in November, but it's much more realistic.

As mentioned earlier, alternative movements are trying to re-establish links between production and consumption, and in doing so they give the food a history, which is largely missing in much of the food industry. This history is

often constructed within a romantic discourse of the local, the traditional and the authentic (Pratt 2007: 285). There are a few city farms in London that aim to educate and show urban dwellers where their food comes from, teach them about horticulture and sustainability and "provide a peaceful escape from city life"[13]. They have gardens visitors can wander through where they grow vegetables, they have several animals that visitors can interact with and they provide information and host courses on food growing. This shows that consumers want to know where their food comes from and want to associate positive stories with the food they buy (Torjusen et al. 2004: 43). Lesley expressed this when she said:

> I think to me good food has a story, so you know what's gone into it and it has been produced with love and there's something more to it than just being a piece of food, so it has culture and traditions and history and…that's good food. It does make it taste better.

A feeling of discontent with modern life and a wish to have more time to spend with your family, to do things you love, and to perhaps grow your own food and be more connected to the land were feelings expressed by many of my informants. Lesley for example said that she thinks that if people had "spent a bit less time working and more time growing vegetables or you know, reading a book, they would be richer in lots of ways. I think that's a sustainable way to live, and I think we'd all be a lot happier". Such disenchantment with modern life and consumerism in particular, Kate Soper has termed 'alternative hedonism' (Soper 2008: 571). This involves an alternative view on what it means to live a good life, as opposed to the conventional view of modern life where high consumption equals a high standard of living. Sustainable consumers, like my informants, want to avoid the displeasures of modern life, like pollution, congestions, stress, noise, ill health, loss of community and personal forms of contact, as well as (re-)discover sensory pleasures that consumerism denies us

[13] http://www.vauxhallcityfarm.org/

(Soper 2008: 571-572; 578). Kjærnes & Torjusen (2012) claim that people who eat organic food do so not only because of health and sustainability issues, but that there is also an interest in organic food as pleasure and experience (Kjærnes & Torjusen 2012: 95). This is true also for my informants, who saw spending time on cooking and buying food as something pleasurable. Susannah for example thought a deeper relationship to food and a love of cooking could improve the quality of life, as she said: "This is the good part of life. Get rid of some of the crap parts of life and embrace cooking, it doesn't have to be difficult, it should be enjoyable". Home cooking is also a sustainable way of preparing food as it is not industrially processed and hence does not compromise the ecosystem. In addition, it identifies individuals and groups around their cultural traditions and way of life (Lairon 2012: 34).

The value of tradition derives from its opposition to industrialised food systems, and highlights linkages between place, people, knowledge and food (Pratt 2007: 294). According to Warde (1997), the appeal of tradition and the pursuit of returning to traditional behaviour, is a perpetual feature of modern thought. One reason is the widespread feeling of insecurity or uncertainty induced by declining normative regulation or social belonging (Warde 1997: 64). My informants did reaffirm the value of tradition and seek out authentic sources of food by buying or growing food they thought of as more natural and real than conventional food. The organic London café chain Daylesford Organics uses that search for tradition and authenticity to appeal to sustainable eaters. In their book "A Love for Food" they say: "What we are really trying to do here at Daylesford is to take a step back in time and re-learn the skills and values of our grandparents' generation, when country people had a kitchen garden or an allotment and ate whatever they grew" (Daylesford 2013: 1). This description as well as descriptions used by many other sustainable food retailers celebrate the traditions of the English countryside and gives an impression of solid values, longevity, history and the survival of traditions. In these descriptions there is an assumption that there once

was a set of shared and common food practices that have recently become discontinued (Warde 1997: 61-62). However, according to Warde (1997), historical accounts suggest that both the content of the British diet and food habits have changed and were neither stable nor widely generalised across the population. The term tradition, then, often conveys fictitious notions of longevity and uniformity, and may serve as a rhetorical device for the legitimation of a particular set of preferences (Warde 1997: 62). Miele & Murdoch (2003) argue that the appreciation for nostalgic foods can be understood not as an irrational reflection of longing for the past but as a coping strategy for the contradictions between the industrial 'fast' food system and the traditional 'slow' food system (Miele & Murdoch 2003: 40).

At the same time as sustainable food consumption can be seen as a need for authenticity and a desire to return to traditional modes of food production and consumption, it could also be argued that the need for novelty plays a role in this. The consumption of sustainable foods can be seen as a rising trend, especially among the middle class, which makes it a practice associated with fashion, novelty and trendiness while at the same time being seen as authentic and traditional (Warde 1997). Lisa explains that she became aware of the importance of local food because it was a recent trend in the UK; "I just became aware of it through the media really, that local was this trend, you know, I read the Guardian word of mouth blog a lot and I'm involved in the foodie scene, and local was a trendy thing". Most of my informants have also, as mentioned, developed their love for food, and thus interest in sustainable foods, by experiencing new tastes in different countries and through foreign cuisines. However, they also fondly remember childhood meals and cook traditional foods they grew up with. There are indeed many stable elements to British eating habits, and it is according to Warde (1997: 58) not hard to find evidence of nostalgia and attachment to foods that remind people of their childhood experiences. These contradictory imperatives "replay the ambivalence of modernity, the tension between the

excitements associated with new experience and the familiarity of traditional modes of doing things" (Warde 1997: 67).

Above I have explored personal motivations and needs that lead to sustainable food consumption practices as well as difficulties and dilemmas faced by these consumers. I have found that my informants find it difficult to choose between different types of sustainable food. They prioritise between local, seasonal and organic "with agony" as most foods have some adverse effects on environments or people. When looking at the needs that drive sustainable food consumption, I discovered that the values of nostalgia and authenticity are important in my informants' rationales to eat sustainably. Buying local food from people you know, strengthening social bonds, wanting to live simpler lives, longing for authentic and natural food and wanting to eat in traditional ways all belong in this romantic discourse. Buying sustainable foods also gives them more control as consumers since they then know where their food comes from, in contrast to conventional supermarket food. Thus, sustainable eating is a reaction against the industrial food system in particular and modern consumer culture more generally. Common motivations for eating sustainably are health concerns, taste, food security, animal welfare and environmental concerns. I found that environmental concerns were what my informants said motivated them the most to consume sustainable foods. However, this motivation was intertwined with, and could not be neatly separated from, the other motivations. In addition, they might have highlighted their environmental concern in interviews knowing I was studying environmental issues. Even though my informants were highly motivated to consume sustainably, there are external factors that also influenced their actual practices and capability to consume these foods. What are these external factors? What do cultural and social factors have to say when it comes to sustainable food consumption?

6. The Cultural and the Social

Having explored my informants' personal motivations and needs for eating sustainable foods, I will now turn to cultural and social factors that shape their sustainable food consumption practices. There is a discrepancy between consumers' overall favourable attitudes towards sustainable food when asked in surveys, and the low actual purchasing of such products (Vermeir & Verbeke 2006; Weatherell et al. 2003). Thus there is a gap between what surveyed consumers think and what they do, which might be due to external factors which prevent the purchase of sustainable products, such as consumers' awareness and knowledge, price differences, and the availability and convenience of sustainable products (Guido 2009: 20-22; Coff 2006: 4). Habitual and routinized practices of everyday life along with pragmatic factors such as price and availability, then, affect whether consumers actually purchase sustainable foods. These factors also influence my informants in the ways and to which extent they fit sustainable food consumption into their everyday lives. All of these factors are dependent on the social and cultural context in which the consumers live. In the first part of this chapter I will be using social practice theory as a starting point to explore how habits and routines, the material world and social relationships affect sustainable food consumption practices. In the second part I will use Bourdieu's concepts of taste, distinction and cultural capital to show how my informants' food consumption practices are affected by their social positions.

Social Practice Theory

Social practice theory is not a coherent theory, but an assembly of theoretical elements from the works of among others Pierre Bourdieu (1990), Anthony Giddens and Michel Foucault. In this thesis I use practice theory as a tool for looking at sustainable food consumption rather than as a main theoretical viewpoint. Practice theory developed as a reaction to the dominant post-modern

understanding of consumption as individual and symbolic (Halkier 2009: 4). In the post-modern view the consumption of sustainable foods can be seen as wanting to portray oneself as a conscious, enlightened and conscientious individual, sending this 'message' to others about one's lifestyle, as well as a way to create or confirm a personal identity (Campbell 1995: 101). Also in most sustainable consumption policies the focus has been on the individual, or more precisely, on the maximising, autonomous, and reflexive individuals "who make consumption happen through rational and purposive decision making" (Wilhite 2012a: 87). This has put the focus on the consumer as a self-interested and isolated individual with the responsibility to help solve many different societal and environmental problems (Halkier 2009: 2; Campbell 1995: 111). Looking at consumption through social practice theory, on the other hand, is not based on the primacy of individual choice, action, or reflection (Warde 2005: 136). Instead, consumption is seen as an integral part of the practices of daily life and the importance of socio-cultural contexts, practical knowledge, social relationships, the material environment and routines and habits are highlighted.

Practices, as used in social practice theory[14], are routinized type of behaviours which consists of interconnected elements such as bodily and mental activities, material environments and things, and knowledge in the "form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz 2002: 249). According to Bourdieu (1990), the objects of knowledge are constructed through *habitus*, "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1990: 52-53). Referring to Bourdieu, Rosenlund (2000) explains that the habitus is a mental structure all social agents have, which is structured by the social space in which one lives. At the same time it is structuring- "it is used in all situations in life, so that the social agents think and perceive the social world in certain

[14] This use is different from the term praxis, which in the singular represents merely an emphatic term to describe the whole of human action (Reckwitz 2002: 249).

determined ways, and act according to quite distinct patterns" (Rosenlund 2000: 49). Practices are also embodied; they are modes of sitting, walking, eating, which do not go through consciousness (Bourdieu 1977: 87). As Bourdieu says, the habitus as embodied history is internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history (Bourdieu 1984: 466). Following the concept of the habitus, Reckwitz (2002) explains that a practice is "a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood" (Reckwitz 2002: 250). Social practice theory, then, acknowledges that many consumption actions have histories, both at societal and individual levels, and that practices are performed and produced in the activities of social life (Wilhite 2012b: 89).

The habitus is incorporated early in the child's life through learning bodily and mental practices from parents and others in their social environment. Many of my informants learned the practices of gardening and/or cooking while growing up, making such bodily routines part of their habitus. In addition, in being dispositions to act and think in certain ways, the habitus guides individuals' behaviour and thinking. Having grown up around food loving parents, learning to appreciate good and natural food early on may have made my informants think in ways that have guided them towards the behaviour of sustainable food consumption later in their lives. This is also connected to one's position in the society into which one is born, which I will get back to later. The habitus, it is important to note, is not fixed and permanent. It can shift in relation to specific contexts and over time. As Rosenlund (2000) points out, "it is modified as the child grows up and "tuned" by the influence of the material conditions associated with occupying certain positions in certain social fields and in the social space" (Rosenlund 2000: 49).[15]

[15] This is discussed further on pages 94-105.

According to Reckwitz (2002), social practices are routines: "routines of moving the body, of understanding and wanting, of using things, interconnected in a practice" (Reckwitz 2002: 255). The habits and routines of daily life are important factors when it comes to food consumption. However, *sustainable* food consumption surely requires some reflexivity, as consumers have consciously made the choice to consume in ways that protect the environment. How, then, do habits and routines affect the food consumption of sustainable consumers such as my informants?

Habits and routines

Food practices like shopping, cooking and eating are deeply embedded in the routines of everyday life (Warde 1997: 199; Torjusen et al. 2004: 28). While ethical consumption is generally regarded to be a reflexive practice, when it comes to choosing what type of food to buy, according to the sociologist Bente Halkier, "everyday consumption practices are as often, if not more frequently, characterised by habits and routine as by intentional reflection and choice" (Halkier 2001b: 26). Sustainable consumers might start to incorporate environmental consideration into their food practices via reflected choices, but over time these choices can become a part of daily habits and no longer require cognition (Halkier 2009: 10). Many of my informants routinely made sustainable consumption choices without thinking or talking about it. Margaret states that sustainable food consumption has become a part of her:

> Well, it's just part of me, you know, I don't think to myself: "oh I mustn't buy that because it's bad" or something. I just am programmed to automatically shop in a certain way, I don't have to actually think.

Habits are indeed "a pre-disposition for acting without the engagement of reflexive knowledge" (Wilhite 2012a: 88). It is only when we encounter new and unfamiliar social arenas, where our habits do not fit that we are forced to think reflexively about what we say and do (Beagan et al. 2011: 754; Ilmonen 2001:

12-13). When my informants found out about the effects of the industrial food system on the environment, health and societies, the routinized food consumption practices they had at that time became explicit and contested (Kjærnes et al. 2007: 27). The bodily and routinized practices of shopping, cooking and eating were disturbed by the environmental challenges now faced by the consumers, leading to ambivalence and dilemmas in the organisation of daily food consumption activities (Halkier 2009: 10). This gradually resulted in new ideologically justified habits, which in turn became tacit and taken for granted (Kjærnes et al. 2007:27). Susannah has consciously changed her food habits throughout her life, becoming a vegetarian at age sixteen and a vegan in her twenties. Having been a vegan for so many years (Susannah being forty six now), buying vegan food has become a habit and routine activity she does not reflect upon any longer. However, more recently, she has stopped going to supermarkets and tries to source most of her food locally, which requires more reflexivity and cognition as these food practices are not yet part of her habitus.

Food consumption practices constitute a particular kind of bodily practice as food is materially taken into the body or kept out. Following this, an important factor influencing food consumption practices is what Halkier (2001a) calls 'the contested space of the body', which refers to bodily practices being caught in the tension between control and desire (Halkier 2001a: 803). This leads to ambivalences and uncertainty in food choice, as your body might desire foods not good for your own health or the health of the environment. Routines are often remembered by the body, and therefore alleviate consumers of the ambivalences of the contested space of the body via the bodily routines they establish (Halkier 2001a: 809). Routines in general serves as means of reducing uncertainty, they make everyday life easier and works as a relief from reflexivity (Ilmonen 2001: 17; Halkier 2001b: 41). The dilemmas and uncertainties faced by my informants when purchasing sustainable foods like those discussed in chapter five, then, can be reduced by making some food choices routine. Julie, for example, routinely

buys organic food, thus she does not have to reflexively think about whether she should get the local or the organic when she is in a shop.

When daily routines become a fundamental part of us, it is very difficult to change them, or to create new ones without great effort (Ilmonen 2001: 17). However, moving to new homes or being faced with different material environments might change practices and habits, like moving into new apartments or houses with bigger and better kitchens, an idea I will discuss further in the chapter regarding the material world. Moving to a different socio-cultural context can entail even more dramatic changes (Wilhite 2012a: 92). Several of my informants have lived in other countries and experienced different food practices there[16]. Some of the food habits they acquired abroad, they brought back home. Because of her husband's job Catherine and her family have lived in different countries for about fifteen years, something that has influenced their food practices, mostly in the way of getting into the habit of eating less meat. As she says:

> …it was only really when we went overseas, and that was to Malaysia to begin with, because there was so much more variety, the kids got used to not necessarily having meat. And there were a lot of things that people ate there, so they got used to eating it. It was jolly good training actually. And actually, particularly Chinese, but also the other Malaysians were very good at eating absolutely everything that they grew, harvested… whereas in this country people were fussy and they'd throw things away. There they would really conserve the lot. It was good education. I think some other countries have far better practices.

What Catherine experienced here is what practice theorists call social learning, a process which involves the acquisition of practical knowledge through a combination of cognitive processes and bodily processes (Wilhite 2012a: 95). Susannah is actually trying to teach others how to eat sustainably through social

[16] See chapter 4.

learning. A few weeks before she met me, she did a workshop with people from her local sustainability group where they cooked a meal made up of local produce to prove it was easy to make things with local food rather than buying imported food, like she said: "so we had a meal made of dips and weeds from the garden to demonstrate that this was quite easy and cheap and nice. So that's… because I think if you demonstrate it it's easier for people to do it than just talk about it". Learning by doing is exactly what social practice theory entails.

The actual purchase of sustainable food depends on the rhythms and routines of daily life. Joan, for example, often comes home late in the evening due to meetings at environmental organisations after work, which means that her only option for shopping food is the supermarket. Like she says: "I probably shop more at supermarkets than I ought to… But if I'm at home at the weekend there's a farmers' market and I do try and shop there". The fact that farmer's markets usually are only a weekly or even monthly event makes it less convenient to use as a regular shopping venue than supermarkets. Working sustainable eating habits into everyday life in today's modern and fast-paced societies is not always easy. Time limits were a big factor for some my informants- Catherine for example talked about cooking for her family when her children were younger:

> I would probably do the cooking because he (her husband) was out at work, and I would buy fish fingers because there wasn't time to do anything else, so there was certainly a bit… and instant mashed potato, and instant, sort of… French fries, that kind of stuff. So, oh yes…one certainly did that. You had to; otherwise you would be tied to the stove.

As we have seen, sustainable food consumption practices are neither only reflexive nor only routine, but as Halkier (2009) says, "rather the two bodily/mental procedures are intertwined with each other" (Halkier 2009: 9). Habits and routines are part of the habitus, which, according to Bourdieu (1984) bridges the gap between social structures (social space) and social practices.

Social space in Bourdieu's sense is "the objective structures which are independent of the consciousness and desires of agent capable of guiding or constraining their practices and their representations" (Bourdieu 1984: 124-125). Following this, the material conditions of existence are inscribed into and make up the habitus (Rosenlund 2000: 49). That is why I now turn to the material world and the way in which it influences food consumption choices.

The material world

Social practice theory acknowledges that the material world can also have agency, which means it has the potential or capability to influence action (Wilhite 2012a). Household appliances, such as refrigerators, freezers and microwaves have the potential to re-shape practices. These technologies have indeed had a profound restructuring effect on home food consumption habits; they have led to changes in diets, different shopping practices and new ways of cooking, from the use of raw ingredients to an increased use of frozen or prepared foods (Wilhite 2012a: 93; van Otterloo 2012: 62-65). According to Kjærnes et al. (2007), the UK has high ownership of microwaves and a large market for ready-made meals (Kjærnes et al. 2007: 125). This has meant that the UK relies on prepared food more than other European countries, which shapes food consumption as well as influencing national and regional cultures of food consumption (Kjærnes et al. 2007: 121). Hence the material world also has agency- it can change consumption patterns and even cultural ideologies and values.

Material agency affects sustainable food consumption practices through the availability and/ or convenience of places you can purchase such products in your neighbourhood. If you want to eat more environmentally friendly foods or support local farmers, you cannot do so if there are no farmers markets or organic food stores around. Indeed, according to Hughner et al. (2007), the lack of availability and/or inconvenience associated with purchasing organic food

presents an important obstacle to its purchase. Farmers' markets also often lack the regularity and convenience demanded by consumers (Vermeir & Verbeke 2006: 175). In London most farmers' markets are arranged once a week, however they are mostly located in central and Western boroughs, where there are more middle class people. The lack of availability is thus also a class-based issue as sustainable food outlets are usually located in more affluent neighbourhoods, making it easier for middle and upper class people to engage in this practice[17].

Seeing that the vast majority of organic foods in the UK are supplied to and purchased at supermarkets (Goodman 2013; Soil Association 2013), one can argue that buying organic food is very available and convenient. However, as previously mentioned, organic foods sold in supermarkets are thoroughly conventionalised and no longer include all the values some ethical consumers are looking for in organic food. Thus compromises have to be made and dilemmas pondered if you want the convenience of shopping at supermarkets, such as those mentioned in chapter five. There are some who think that the fact that supermarkets sell organic food is positive, like Julie, who said: "I think it's a wonderful and important step in convincing other people and making it visible and giving everybody the choice really". Likewise, Mark used his parents as examples:

> My mother wouldn't know where to get it (sustainable food); she wouldn't know what to do with it. She's got the skills, but she doesn't have the knowledge or the preference you know. So in principle it's available, but in practice it's not. This is why it can evolve through supermarkets, because most people are not going to eat more sustainably unless it's available to them in the supermarkets.

Heather mentioned availability as the biggest challenge for her for eating sustainably, saying that "for me it's not just about price, it's about availability. If

[17] See further discussions on page 101.

organic food, or sustainably produced food, is available people will be able to buy it, if it's not there you can't buy it. It's that simple". Joan told me that she had been in her local supermarket and wanted to buy onions. However, there were only onions from far-away places like China and South-Africa available, even though they were in season in the UK at the time. She was appalled and had contacted the supermarket who has responded that they are trying to get the customers the best possible price. This makes it difficult for consumers who have to shop in supermarkets to choose sustainable options. Catherine recounted how availability affected her shopping practices:

> After using what's in the vegetable box, in a way you're forced to buy what you see, so you know… I buy organic sugar when I see it, and organic flour if I see it, but if I don't see it, if I'm not in the right shop, in that case it's just the ordinary flour and stuff. So yes, so on the whole one tries but you can't always manage it. And sometimes you want to make something and think "Golly, I need that fruit to do it" and it just has to be non-organic so there you go.

The availability of sustainable food outlets in London varies greatly between areas. In the North -Western and Central boroughs there are significantly more farmers markets, organic restaurants and cafés, gardening projects and local sustainability communities than in southern and eastern boroughs. During my fieldwork I was staying in the borough of Kensington & Chelsea in West/Central London, where it was not that difficult to find organic and vegetarian cafés and shops or farmer's markets. The stores in an area are quite informative of the group or class of people who live there. Doing an interview in East Ham in the borough of Newham in North-East London I noticed there were a lot of Poundland shops, fast food chains and moneylenders as well as old and worn down buildings. This provided a striking difference to Kensington & Chelsea or the borough of Hackney, where I noticed there were a lot of organic and whole food shops in addition to the well-known Broadway market. Heather comes from

and currently lives in a borough in North-East London, where, on the other hand, the availability of sustainable food is scarce. As she said,

> It is hard to get a hold of organic food in our area. Sainsbury's and Tesco are the only ones who do it, but only… you know, they might do an organic broccoli, but they won't do anything else, so it's really hard to get hold of… I try to do most of my shopping in farmer's markets now, but I do still shop in some supermarkets because there isn't a regular farmers' market near me. There's one once a month, and they don't always do organic food.

However, she is hopeful because she thinks it is becoming more available as there are more box schemes and growing sites popping up in her area. She herself is in fact in the process of starting up her own box scheme to make it easier for residents in her area to get hold of fresh produce straight from farmers. She is thus actively changing the material agency of her borough so that purchasing sustainable foods gets easier. Most of my informants found it easy to maintain their sustainable consumption in London, however, they also mostly lived in areas with quite a few choices of sustainable food outlets, like in Margaret's borough- "there is a growing sustainable movement and the local government council are really on board". They all agree, however, that you have to really want it to be able to see it, as Joan says: "if you really, really try and see it, there are plenty of health food shops or veg box schemes or places to grow your own. I mean I think if you're motivated then they're there". Even though there were, as mentioned, quite a few options for sustainable shops, restaurants and cafés in the area I stayed, I did have to search a bit to find them. There are so many options for places to eat in London, many of them fast food places and pubs, so you do indeed have to be interested to find sustainable places, even in the wealthier boroughs.

Lesley mentioned that the biggest challenge for her is when she's "just out and about and hungry", it is difficult to get hold of good, sustainable food. For

example, when she visited Borough market, she "wanted to eat organic vegetables and I couldn't find them… I was in a food market!". Also, the availability of processed foods everywhere in London and the lack of fresh food makes it difficult when you're out and about. Like Andrew says "there are places where all you get is high street offer and it will be mostly rubbish. But if you're hungry, what do you do?" Likewise, Lesley recounts:

> When you're at the train platform, you know in the mornings, you're running late to work, so what do you get? You get milky coffee, you have caffeine, not nice milk and a sugary muffin, that has all sorts of bad fat, and it's a recipe for disaster and that's how a lot of the country starts their day. And if you could just get a piece of, like a nice piece of fruit which I think is impossible. And I've had that dilemma, what do I do? Do I get something processed? Sometimes you just want something fresh… well I do because I'm used to it. Yeah I think that's the problem, processed food is easier to get because it's more available.

When the material/physical environment around us changes, our food practices change. When Karolina went to university, it was difficult for her to eat sustainably as there was a lot of university food hall food and take-outs. However, when she moved into an apartment with a kitchen, she started cooking more, and thus eating more sustainable and home cooked foods. Having a kitchen that makes it easy to cook definitely makes a difference. Lisa talks about how she was living when she first moved to the UK:

> I really didn't have a well- equipped kitchen… it was tiny. Four of us were living in a flat with one shelf in the fridge each, or maybe not even a whole shelf, and then cupboard space was minimal as well. So my diet was really quite limited by that, and by the equipment available to me.

When she moved into an apartment with a bigger kitchen with more space, her cooking habits changed again. She also recently obtained a small community garden food plot so she was able to start growing her own food.

My first impression of London was not that it was a particularly sustainable place to live, not when TV-shows had me picturing life in the countryside as the sustainable dream. The concrete and the grey surfaces, tall buildings, traffic, crowds of people and smell of frying oil from fast food shops almost everywhere you go does not fit with such a sustainable vision. However, all of my informants said that living in London actually makes it easier to live sustainably. The availability of public transport makes it easy to travel across London to farmer's markets in environmentally friendly ways, like Heather does: "yeah it's easier for me because of the infrastructure they have here, and if I want to go to Oval farmers' market on the other side of London to get decent food then I can, and it doesn't at the moment cost me too much, which is good". There is also an array of shops and restaurants to choose from, as Lisa said, "in London there's an incredible availability of any kind of food you want to eat". There are, in general, more choices in London than in more rural areas. Daniel pointed out that living in London makes it "much easier to meet likeminded people, it's much easier to have questions answered, and there tends to be more younger and forward thinking people". However, there are challenges to eating sustainably in London too. Like Julie said: "last weekend when I decided I wanted to pick berries, you have to drive an hour outside of London to pick berries and back in again, so yeah…". Issues like this can in fact hurt the environment because of the greenhouse gases emitted by driving a car. We have seen that the material world influence and can even change sustainable food consumption practices. Next, I will look at social relationships and the role they play when it comes to sustainable eating.

Social relationships

Any lifestyle, and any consumption pattern, has to be seen in relation to other lifestyles and other consumption patterns. By using social practice theory, I can understand how relationships with others often have major impacts on personal

consumption choices, which means that such choices are seldom done by individuals in isolation. As Reckwitz (2002) states, "to say that practices are 'social practices' is indeed a tautology: A practice is social, as it is a 'type' of behaving and understanding that appears at different locales and at different points of time and is carried out by different body/minds" (Reckwitz 2002: 250). Food choices, then, are not solely individual or instrumental, but need to be seen in the context in which they take place, including the social embeddedness of consumption practices (Kjærnes 2012: 146).

Food is a social endeavour; of all the things humans have in common, eating is among the most fundamental. In addition, actions do not take place in isolation but always include others (Coff 2006: 14, 23). Hence individuals continually construct meanings to make sense of their choices in light of their positions relative to other people and their own environment (Weatherell 2013: 243). Thus, the historical and contemporary social relationships of people and places matter when it comes to sustainable food consumption practices (Beagan et al. 2011: 767). For example, Martin became a vegetarian because he was influenced by a friend who had turned vegetarian thanks to his partner. Likewise, Mark is influenced by Susannah, who is a member of the same sustainability group, to also try to source more of his food locally, and Heather was influenced by her last partner to start going to farmer's markets, and ever since she has bought most of her food there. She also said that

> I think having a partner changes how you cook, because we cooked together, cause now I'm single, I don't cook as much because I don't like cooking for me. I eat very, very well when I got friends around because I will make time, but otherwise I don't eat quite as well as I should.

Food consumption practices, then, change according to who you are cooking for, or with. Whether you are alone, have a family, have friends over- or if you have a picky husband, which Margaret mentioned as a limitation to her cooking. As

seen in chapter four, family ties are important when it comes to cooking and eating sustainable foods, an activity which is performed as a 'marker of love and care' for the family (Lewis 2008: 229). Consuming sustainable foods because of the environment may perhaps also be seen as a marker of love and care, not only for your own family, but for the world more generally. As Coff (2006) says, food ethics are today also about the care for others, including the environment, society and others in so far as these are related to food (Coff 2006: 22). As we have seen throughout this thesis, care, solidarity and collective concern can be manifested through processes of consumption, and food can be used to strengthen social bonds (Lewis 2008: 229).

Many rely more on the experience of their peers when making purchase decisions rather than product information and sales pitches. Important sources of information for potential sustainable consumers are people in their family or social networks who are already consuming such foods. In this way, people take advantage of the experiences of others (Wilhite 2012a: 95). Catherine, for example, said:

> I'm influenced a lot by other people, you know, they say they believe in this and they can find it there, then you'll make a note of that actually. So it's worthwhile talking to people, sometimes they know things, and sometimes they're quite interested in what you do.

As explained in chapter five, sustainable consumers often participate in sustainable networks and socialise with like-minded others. This strengthens their conviction and is important for their own practices regarding food, as they might, like Catherine, learn something and receive tips from their peers. Andrew mentioned how he feels that his consumption habits make a difference "partly because some of the people I'm doing it with, the image it has on them and beyond them". Lesley is originally from America, but has lived in London for a

long time, and has built up a network of friends who are sustainable consumers as well. She says:

> When I go to America I'm always a bit depressed, there's just so much rubbish out there, and I see family and friends consuming bad food, and I don't preach, I think setting a good example is the best way of changing peoples' habits.

Social relationships, as we have seen, are important when it comes to consumption practices of individuals. The habitus itself is inherently social, as it is created and perpetuated through socialisation early in life and affected by social and material environments throughout life. The social conditions in which the habitus develops are dependent on which social class you belong to, which is what I will look at next.

Taste and social classes

Social practices are internally differentiated on many dimensions (Warde 2005: 138). According to Bourdieu (1984), there are two main principles of differentiation in society, economic capital and cultural capital. Economic capital is the economic resources one has, while cultural capital is cultural knowledge, which works as legitimisation of power inequalities in society. Taste, knowledge and the desire for particular commodities are necessary elements in the process of class formation and class reproduction. According to Bourdieu (1984), practices and cultural preferences are closely linked to education level and social origin, and there is a type of habitus for any class of positions in the social space (Bourdieu 1984: 1). I will first look at the economic capital part of it, exploring the prices of sustainable food and seeing whether the cost is a challenge for my informants or whether they have sufficient amount of economic capital. I will then turn to the question of taste in Bourdieu's sense and explore this in connection with social classes. Lastly I will look at the importance of cultural capital when it comes to sustainable food consumption.

The price of virtue- economic capital

As I discussed in chapter three, sustainable consumers are often people with a relatively high income, and market research generally suggests that cost is a major barrier to participation in ethical consumption markets (Johnston et al 2011; Hughner et al. 2007). Privileged consumers have more income to participate in upscale niche markets, and may have more exposure to stores selling ethical products, which are often located in affluent neighbourhoods (Johnston et al. 2011: 296). High income, however, does not guarantee engagement in sustainable food practices. Most of my informants do belong to the middle class and have enough money to engage in sustainable food consumption. However, the price of sustainable, especially of organic, food was still an issue for almost all of them. Hence, cost concerns shaped how sustainable food consumption was actually carried out in daily food practices (Johnston et al. 2011: 302).

During my fieldwork I compared the prices for organic and conventional produce at four supermarkets (Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Mark & Spencer Foods) as well as specialty stores like Planet Organic and Whole Foods Market[18]. I found that overall, the price differences between organic meat and non-organic meat were the most significant ones, while vegetable prices did not vary that much. The price for a whole chicken illustrates the differences well. At M&S Foods for example, a whole organic chicken cost £7.09/kg while a non-organic chicken cost £3.33/kg. At Wimbledon farmer's market a whole organic chicken from Galileo organic farm was £7.05. At Planet Organic it was even more expensive at £10.78/kg. Several of my informants were concerned about the high price of organic meat compared to conventional meat. Margaret for example said:

[18] See appendix D

> Cost is certainly an issue when it comes to organic meat, if I were eating a lot of meat, you know… an organically reared chicken from the farmers' market, the last time I bought it, which was about a year ago, was about £12 for a chicken, and if you go and get a rubbish industrially farmed chicken with a miserable existence, you know, it will cost you about £3. So it's a quarter of the price, so you have to get used to the idea that if you are going to eat meat, you don't really want to have a chicken every week, or twice a week… to think; well it'll be just a treat. So cost does come into it if I were eating meat I would say, yeah.

Most of my informants eat meat sparingly, or not at all. This saves them from buying the expensive organic meat often, so that they can afford it when they do eat it. For Catherine, the price of organic meat was part of the reason she and her family only eat meat once or twice a week: "Yes, so one of the reasons why we don't buy much meat is not only is it difficult to get organic stuff, but it's also jolly expensive. So that's why I might buy it once a week".

What I also noticed when comparing prices was that while in supermarkets the price difference between organic and non-organic fruits and vegetables was not that significant, at Planet Organic such organic produce cost more, sometimes significantly more, than at supermarkets. Organic strawberries, for example, were around £10/kg at supermarkets (Tesco and Waitrose), while at Planet Organic they were £17.7/kg, even though they were all from the UK (either Herefordshire or Sussex). The first time I went to Planet Organic and Whole Foods Market I ended up spending £30 in each shop even when I did not buy that much. Karolina had noticed this price difference and did not comprehend why organic produce cost so much more at certain outlets:

> I don't know whether it's because of the production or because having the organic name associated with it, but whatever they're doing I don't understand why, like, two bits of broccoli can be like £6 here (Daylesford Organics) or at Planet Organic considering how little effort it takes to make them grow in an organic environment, which I've seen personally. I do think it's a bit of a

> trend… like if you go to Whole Foods their prices are exorbitant. I don't think feeding ourselves should cost that much if we were doing it really locally.

The sociologist Josée Johnston suggests that the high prices and emphasis on 'quality' in shops like Whole Foods Market and Planet Organic "legitimises the inequalities capitalist markets by validating elite food consumption as ethical, natural, and part of good 'taste'" (Johnston 2008: 257).[19]

While some of my informants were quite flexible when it came to buying expensive organic food, sometimes opting for, for instance, the cheaper non-organic (but perhaps local) options instead, others were more committed to always buying organic despite the cost. Heather for example said she buys organic even though she does not have that much money, like she said: "because I know that my money does have an impact, I will buy organic food, regardless of my budget, and it just means that I buy less and I make do with what I've got". Instead of compromising and buying cheaper conventional food, she found some strategies for saving money on food, like buying foods in bulk and freezing it. Another strategy two of my informants mentioned as a way to save money while not compromising the sustainability of the food was buying a bread machine and baking your own bread with organic flour. Martin started doing this after his local store stopped selling organic bread, and it has saved him a lot of money. Mark does the same and said: "I don't know why more people don't do that, it's so easy. It's cheaper and better and taste better. And it takes less time than it takes to walk to the shop and buy bread". One could argue that a bread maker uses electricity and is therefore not completely environmentally friendly. In addition, it costs money to buy a bread maker, but as Mark points out: "you can get a second hand one, you know… and it will save you money in about 3 months". Susannah saves money with a pressure cooker, as she says:

[19] See page 99-102 for further discussions on 'taste'.

> The best way to eat cheaply is to eat unprocessed food, that's what it comes down to. If you buy your pulses, if you invest in a pressure cooker, you save a huge amount of money on just buying dried pulses and stuff instead of buying canned and cooked foods and stuff like that.

Martin, the only informant who was working class does not buy that much organic, "mainly because of the cost", as he said. He eats organic bread he makes with his bread maker, and buys organic yoghurt if it is on promotion. For Lesley, cost is also an issue when buying food as she and her family are sometimes on a strict budget. However, as she said, "we always eat well though. I mean food is a priority for us; it always has been in my whole family. Food's always been the thing that we spend money on". This is common for many sustainable food consumers, prioritising spending money on food rather than consumer goods like cars, televisions and other luxury items. Food is important in their lives, as discovered in chapter four, and is according to my informants therefore worth spending money on. At the same time as food is a priority for Lesley, she does not think they spend a lot of money on food compared to others. She argues that this is because they on the whole do not eat much processed food, sticking to basic produce that you can make filling meals from, as she says:

> If we're on a budget I will make the bread, I'll make everything from scratch. It does take a lot of time to do, I do stay up pretty late sometimes cooking. But yeah actually it does, you know, help with budgeting if you have basic cooking skills and can make things, because a bag of flour can make you so many things.

Making food from scratch in general is usually a money-saving as well as sustainable and healthy practice. While some people, like Lesley and Susannah, did have time to cook most meals from scratch, not everyone had that luxury due to being time-constrained in their busy lives, as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Evidently, cost *is* an issue for my informants and is something that shapes their food consumption practices. However, most of the time they prioritise buying

sustainable food, and instead find cheap solutions through ways of buying and preparing food. Their taste for such foods has developed through their lives, and has also depended on their place in the society, which I will look at next.

A taste for sustainable food

Taste is a system of classificatory schemes developed as part of the habitus, and works as a kind of social orientation, a 'sense if one's place', guiding people towards the social positions that fit their characteristics, and towards the activities or goods that fit those in this position (Bourdieu 1984: 173; 466). The habitus influences the reflection and judgement of one's own and others' practices in an automatic and subconscious way (Warde 1997: 9). Consumption behaviour, then, is a way in which social classes display their place in a hierarchical system of social distinction. That is why, according to Bourdieu (1984), taste can be a particularly good marker of 'class'. According to Warde (1997: 109), it has been widely accepted that in the United Kingdom class cultures exists as a result not only of financial power but of learned tastes that were deeply ingrained in, and consistent with, other aspects of daily life (Warde 1997: 109).

According to Atkins & Bowler (2001:272), tastes are derived from our culturally constructed inclinations for particular dishes and ingredients, and our socially derived desire for our consumption habits to show us in the best possible light. For some people what and where they eat is a very conscious expression of their personal identities and style of life (Warde 1997: 118). Hence, the consumption of environmentally friendly food can be used to draw cultural and moral boundaries that provide a sense of distinction and differentiation from others (Johnston et al. 2011: 299). Indeed, "food is used as a means of establishing and reaffirming a family's identity and of drawing external boundaries" (Atkins & Bowler 2001: 300). Johnston et al. (2011) found that, in Canada, cultural boundaries were most strongly drawn by white middle class families when

talking about food quality and healthfulness, where the distinction was between them as 'good' eaters, and others as 'bad' eaters (Johnston et al. 2011: 306). Among my informants, too, distinctions were made between themselves as quite aware and conscious eaters, and other British people, who they perceived as 'bad eaters', eating junk food and a lot of it, in addition to being ignorant about food issues. Joan mentioned that she thinks ignorance is an important barrier for people to buy sustainable food in the UK, as she said: "I don't think people really always understand what seasonal vegetable and food is, I think they just assume that somehow it's ok to buy tomatoes all year around". Taste is, as Rosenlund (2000) states, also a distaste of the lifestyles of others situated far away in social space (Rosenlund 2000: 58). The following quotes illustrate what my informants thought about some other British people's eating habits:

> I think this talk about people who are too poor to buy good food is probably nonsense, because they're spending a lot more on junk food. There are children who are sent to school in the morning who don't get a proper breakfast, they will have things like fried chicken for breakfast, and they might have something similar for lunch, so they actually are spending quite a lot of money on rubbish. You CAN eat well and have very little money. Sorry, you can, and you don't have to grow it all yourself. Absolute nonsense! (Margaret)

> I suppose it's not only the financial bit, it's the education of it, which is terribly snobbish of me to sit here and say. But I see how my students eat and it's just nonsensical. They don't really have breakfast; they have at least 2 or 3 kinds of sweets or chocolates every day, always drinking coke. Some of them have lunch, but normally only a sandwich (Daniel).

> I mean, there is a program on the radio here called the Food Programme, and sometimes they interview students going off to university and some of them don't even know how to boil an egg! And I mean, I'm not joking, they absolutely have no idea how to prepare even a basic meal, and that seems to me pathetic (Joan).

The world shows itself differently to people with different habitus. As Bourdieu (1984) writes, for people in the middle and upper classes, who have their basic needs fulfilled, the world is structured as fine distinctions and nuances. This means that they have the freedom to choose foods that reflect the values they want to inhabit, such as sustainable food. On the other hand, for people lower down in the social hierarchy, eating and feeding their families is in itself the achievement (Johnston et al. 2011: 297). Like Bourdieu says: "the true basis of the differences found in the area of consumption is the opposition between the tastes of luxury (or freedom) and the tastes of necessity" (Bourdieu 1984: 177). The luxurious interior design and feeling I got at Daylesford Organics' farm in Gloucestershire shows that this venue is for middle and upper class people, the farm even having a modern and luxurious spa on its premises. In addition, both Whole Foods Market and Planet Organic have stores in central and western parts of London only, and not the less well-off South-Eastern parts. This shows that they cater to people who have the money to spend on more expensive food. As Johnston (2008) argues, the high prices in specialty stores like these legitimises class boundaries by validating the food consumption habitus of elites as more ethical than those lacking cultural or economic capital to make similar food choices for themselves or their children (Johnston 2008: 258).

According to Bourdieu, class-based 'tastes', the ability to judge aesthetic values, "is inseparable from taste in the sense of the capacity to discern the flavours of foods which implies a preference for some of them" (Bourdieu 1984: 99). The actual taste for particular foods, then, is also part of the habitus and class position. As an example, Mark said: "I'm lucky that I've got a taste that I'm actually quite happy to eat vegetables, not everybody thinks that that is food, you know". Here I want to repeat what I wrote about the motivation of taste in chapter five, "fruit and vegetables bought in supermarkets out of season were

seen as something which *lacked taste*"[20]. Can this focus on the tastefulness of seasonal and to some extent organic foods and the tastelessness of imported, conventional and non-seasonal food perhaps be seen as not only an organoleptic[21] taste preference, but also as a class-based taste for sustainable foods?

The role of knowledge- cultural capital

Purchasing sustainable products is not simply an indicator of one's economic resources, but also relies on the possession of 'cultural capital' (Johnston et al. 2011: 296). Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1984), means knowledge in a wide sense of the word, including scientific knowledge, manners, education, familiarity with the society's social codes etc., which is not equally available to all members of a society, and which is valued in certain parts of that society (Bourdieu 1984: 228; Bugge 2002: 237-238). Knowledge of what foods are politically correct and environmentally defensible can be seen as cultural capital held by ethical consumers, and this in turn influences which foods are eaten and valued by different social classes. Cultural capital exists as bodily dispositions, as habitus, which makes individuals behave, understand and evaluate in certain ways (Bugge 2002: 225; 238). Furthermore, the cultural capital acquired through habitus (re)produces itself so that inequitable social relations appear natural and obvious (Johnston 2008: 257).

Knowledge of the production history of the food constitutes the basis for the ethical standpoint of the consumer. Without knowledge, consumers are excluded from acting or shopping ethically. They cannot ask: could the production history be different? (Coff 2006: 24). According to Vermeir & Verbeke (2006), studies show that the majority of consumers often have limited knowledge of agriculture

[20] See page 48.

[21] The aspects of food as experienced by the senses, including taste, sight, smell, and touch.

and its production processes and a lack of insight into the implication of their food purchase decisions for the food supply chain. Part of the reason for this is that the benefits of sustainable products are poorly communicated to consumers via small amounts of available information or complex labels (Vermeir & Verbeke 2006: 175). Sustainable consumers, on the other hand, are thought to possess heightened awareness of the socio-economic issues related to food and farming, and to readily make the link between the foods they buy and the production origins and methods underlying them (Weatherell et al. 2003: 234).

All of my informants except one possess, as mentioned, bachelor's degrees or higher. Boström & Klintman (2009), who write about the political and ethical consumer, suggest that well-educated people are better trained and stimulated to follow the flow of information, codes and symbols that are disseminated from media and experts, and communicated in official debates. Thus their higher education may make them better prepared to handle and select among and enormous amount of information, codes and signs communicated through for instance food labels (Boström & Klintman 2009: 6). In addition, having a sense that one can contribute to social change through consumer choice presupposes a sense of imagined global community. People with less formal education may perhaps be less inclined to define trivial consumer choices as political and ethical (Boström & Klintman 2009: 6). All of this can be seen as cultural capital held by sustainable consumers, my informants included.

Cooking skills is something I argue is part of cultural capital, and which facilitates sustainable food consumption. Without knowing how to cook, it is difficult to make homemade, unprocessed food. Many of my informants learned to cook from their parents or other people in their formative social networks. This made them both capable of cooking healthy and sustainable food from scratch and also enhanced their interest in food. This is, however, the case more

so for the women than the men. As I discovered in chapter four[22], women are more engaged in sustainable food consumption, and perhaps the cooking skills acquired when growing up is one of the reasons for the gender gap. According to Bourdieu's habitus theory, the bodily disposition of habitus is created through a long and systematic, but often sub-conscious, socialisation work. Cultural capital is acquired in its embodied form through the family in childhood and adolescence, and then it may accumulate and grow via the influence of the educational system (Bugge 2002: 239; Rosenlund 2000: 41). Most of my informants did not, however, learn a great deal about the problems in the conventional food system from their parents. But as we saw in chapter four, they did grow up in environments where cooking food and eating together were cherished activities which strengthened family bonds. In that way they were perhaps socialised into eventually becoming sustainable consumers, starting with a love of food. However, there are probably people who have food-loving parents who have not ended up as sustainable consumers. Hence formal education and perhaps even more so, independent research[23], is what I argue has made my informants become the sustainable consumers they are today. This is of course facilitated by their position in the middle class and their opportunity to pursue higher education. In addition, cultural capital can arguably also be accumulated through learning experiences like traveling. My informants built on their cultural capital through traveling and learning about other cultures' food practices[24], which also led them into sustainable consumption. This way of acquiring cultural capital shows that there is greater flexibility in today's class structures compared to the more rigid class boundaries suggested by Bourdieu.

[22] Page 31-32.

[23] See chapter 4, especially the subchapter «Becoming aware».

[24] See the subchapter «Experiencing new tastes» in chapter 4.

It has become clear in my above discussions that individual motivations and needs alone cannot explain sustainable food consumption behaviour, or how it is practiced in everyday lives. Social practice theory highlights that our embodied dispositions acquired through socialisation early in life, the habitus, as well as habits and routines, affect everyday consumer behaviour. As do the roles of the material environment, social relationships and pragmatic factors like price and availability. The social class in which one grows up shapes the habitus and influences the amount of cultural capital one gains, and thus the taste one has towards different foods. An important reason why my informants are sustainable eaters is that they have acquired knowledge about the production practices of the industrial food system and how this affects the society and environment, which is a type of cultural capital. The ability and inclination to acquire such knowledge is based on their place in the middle class, their opportunity for higher education, and their habitus, which has formed within and been shaped by that class. Cultural and social factors do, as we have seen, strongly affect sustainable consumption practices.

7. Conclusion

As sustainable food consumption is a way individuals deal with environmental problems caused by the industrial food system, it is important to understand the reasons why some consumers choose to eat sustainable foods. My purpose in this thesis has thus been to understand who becomes sustainable consumers, and why they engage in the practice of sustainable consumption. This has included an exploration of the backgrounds and upbringing of my informants as well as their paths to becoming sustainable consumers. I have also looked into their motivations and needs for buying such foods, the dilemmas they encounter along the way, as well as social and cultural hindrances and encouragements for engaging in this practice. Answering my main research question has included answering the three sub-questions, the findings of which I will go through below.

Who consumes sustainable foods; what are their backgrounds and how did they get into sustainable food consumption?

Several quantitative studies have shown that people who consume sustainable food are generally part of the middle class, in their middle age, mostly female, and politically active. My informants were indeed mostly from the middle class, female and to a certain extent politically active. It seems that age has less of a significance. I found that my informants got into sustainable food consumption through their love of food, which started in their childhoods, when they were taught by their parents the value of natural food. Travelling to other places and experiencing new food and new ways of acquiring and preparing food, heightened their interest in and passion for food, and they learnt new and more sustainable ways of consuming foods. When information about the adverse effects of the industrial food system started surfacing in society, my informants looked into what this meant by reading books, watching documentaries and doing general research on the topic. Consequently, they started changing their

food consumption practices, buying and eating less meat, and buying more organic, local and seasonal food.

What motivates them to consume sustainable foods? What dilemmas do they face in this pursuit?

My informants mentioned several motivations for buying sustainable foods, including taste, health, animal welfare and environmental concerns. The motivation they all said was most important for them was the environmental concerns, although this was closely interlinked with the other motivations, especially health concerns, and may have been highlighted because I was studying environmental issues. I have also argued that control needs, social integration needs and authenticity needs influence the way they consume food. This means that they consume sustainable foods as a way to have more control over where their food has come from by buying straight from the farmer, using this as a way to connect with other people who share their values, and because they want to reconnect to the local land and traditional ways of living through more natural and authentic food practices. Consuming sustainably is not always easy, however, as there are uncertainties and dilemmas around the choice of food. Should one choose the locally grown non-organic apple or the organic apple shipped from the other side of the world? Is the organic apple industrially produced? What about buying the apple from the country which might need the money? Such questions along with many more are what sustainable consumers ask themselves on an every-day basis. While they all would prefer buying local, seasonal and organic every time, or alternatively grow it themselves, there are constraints that make this difficult.

What part do cultural and social factors play in sustainable consumption practices?

When looking at sustainable food consumption in everyday life it is clear that social and cultural factors shape these practices. By using social practice theory I discovered that daily habits and routines, social relationships, and the material world affected my informants' actual food consumption practices. So did pragmatic factors like availability, convenience and price. Growing up in social environments in the middle class where natural and good food as well as cooking skills were valued shaped my informants' habitus so that they became prone to learning about food system issues when they surfaced. Acquiring the cultural capital of knowing about the effects of food consumption on the environment is based on their habitus, their place in the middle class and their opportunity for higher education. The social environment and class you grow up in, then, as well as material and social contexts throughout your life together shape your consumption practices. The contexts in which my informants have lived their lives made them become the sustainable consumers they are today.

While figuring out how to get more people to consume sustainable food has not been a focus in my research, it is a question which is interesting for further research. Some of my findings might be useful in this research, for example knowing that certain types of people are more prone to becoming interested in sustainable food than others. Knowing how they learnt about food system issues could also be helpful to this end. In addition, it is valuable to know that the social and material environment including infrastructure and availability of sustainable food outlets strongly affect sustainable behaviour. Also, the dilemmas and uncertainties faced by my informants illustrate that there is still a lot that has to be done in different food systems in order for it to become easier to consume sustainably and 'eat for the planet'.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide

Personal details

Name?

Age?

Birth place?

Current living place (borough)?

Number and age of siblings?

What is your education?

What is your profession?

Do you have a partner?

Do you have children?

Childhood

Where did you live?

What did your parents do for a living?

Who cooked meals when you were growing up?

Can you explain the mealtimes?

What kinds of foods did you eat? (organic, local, fast-food, microwaveable, from scratch, healthy...)

Where was the food bought (supermarkets, farmer's markets, local stores)? By whom?

Did your parents grow any of their own food?

How central was meat to the meals? What kind of meat?

What did your parents teach you about food and diets?

Did you have any thoughts about where the food came from?

Did you get lunch at school? What kind of food was it?

Adult life/ Family life

How has your food habits changed throughout your life? (When you moved away from home, when you were studying/working etc.)

Tell me about your food habits and practices nowadays? (What kind of foods, where is it bought etc.)

How central is meat to the meals? What kind of meat?

Where do you usually get your food? (Supermarkets, farmers' markets, local stores, home grown)

How often do you eat out at restaurants? What kind of restaurants?

How often do you attend dinner parties with your friends?

Who is responsible for buying food and cooking meals in your family today?

Do you eat meals together as a family?

What do you emphasise when you teach your children about food and diets?

Sustainable food consumption- opinions and habits

What does “good” food mean to you? What does “bad” food mean to you?

What is sustainable food to you?

When did you start eating sustainable foods? Why?

How do you perceive conventional farming and food provisioning?

What do you consider as the most important reasons for consuming sustainable foods? (Environment, health, animal welfare, food security, taste)

Which aspects of sustainability do you consider the most? (Social, environmental, economic)

To what degree would you say you consciously consider environmental issues when shopping for food? What about ethical, political or social issues?

How do you prioritise when you shop for food? (Organic, local, seasonal, vegan, vegetarian)

What are your thoughts about the importance of organic food?

What do you think about the supermarkets selling organic food?

What is local food to you? Is eating locally important to you?

Do you grow any of your own food?

What are your thoughts about the importance of seasonal foods?

What are your thoughts on meat consumption?

Is cost an issue for you when buying foods?

Would you say sustainable eating is available to all parts of society?

What or who inspires and motivates you to cook and eat the way you do? (TV-chefs, cooks, cookbooks, TV-shows, social networks, people in your life)

Do you think you make a difference by consuming the way you do? How?

Are you active in any green or sustainable organisations or clubs?

Do you feel you are part of a green or sustainable community in any way?

Do most of your family and friends consume sustainable foods as well?

Do you try to live sustainably in other parts of your life? How?

What do you think about the British diet in general?

What are the biggest challenges for eating sustainably?

How easy or difficult would you say it is to consume sustainable foods in London today? Is it available and convenient?

How would you say your sustainable lifestyle fit in in an urban environment like London?

How could it be made easier to consume sustainable foods?

What do you think are the barriers to people changing to a more sustainable diet?

Appendix B: Letter of informed consent

Request to participate in an interview for a master's thesis

I am a master's student at Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo in Norway, and I am currently doing research for my master's thesis about sustainable food consumption in London, UK. I want to find out who consumes sustainable foods like organic, local and seasonal foods, and their rationales for doing so. I am interested in how consumers understand sustainable food consumption and how they work these ideas into their daily eating and shopping habits. I am also learning how to do qualitative research through interviews.

I will interview 10-15 people who frequently buy local, organic, and/or other sustainable foods. The questions will in addition to covering food consumption practices, also involve questions about the interviewee's background in order to find out about possible reasons for consuming sustainably.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without further reasoning. I will use a tape recorder during the interview to make sure that our conversation is recorded accurately, however, you can ask me to stop the recorder at any time. The information I get will be treated confidentially, and the final thesis will not include any information that would identify you. The information I get will be anonymised and the recordings will be erased when I finish my thesis, within June 1st 2014.

If you have any questions about the research, you can contact me or my supervisor via email. Student: Marte Giaever, marteegi@student.sv.uio.no. Supervisor and employee at Centre for Development and the Environment: Karen Victoria Lykke Syse, karen.v.l.syse@sum.uio.no

I have read and understood the information, and I agree to participate in the study.

_____ _____

Place and date Signature

Appendix C: Informants

The informants' names are fictional. Only their gender, age and living situation are indicated.

Karolina is 33 years old and lives in Central London. She is originally from Poland, but grew up in New York, USA. She lived a few years in Italy before moving to London. She has no children.

Margaret is 62 years old and lives in North London. She is originally from California, USA, but has lived in England most of her life. She is active in a local sustainability group as well as a community garden. She is married and has two daughters.

Lisa is 32 years old and lives in Central London. She is originally from New Zealand, but has lived in London for 6 years and has British parents. She has no children. She is a vegetarian.

Julie is 51 years old and lives in North London. She is originally from Denmark, but has lived extended periods in both England and in Brazil, where she and her husband owns a small organic farm. She has three sons.

Daniel is 26 years old and he is one of Julie's sons. He is thus also from Denmark, but his father is Canadian and he grew up in Denmark, England and Brazil. He currently lives in North London. He has no children.

Heather is 32 years old and lives in North-East London, where she also grew up. She has lived several different places in England over the years. She is currently setting up a local vegetable box scheme in her area.

Catherine is 72 years old and lives in North London. She is originally from New Zealand, but has lived in the UK for most of her life. She has been a teacher, but is now retired. She has three children.

Martin is 68 years old and lives in East London, where he also grew up. He is retired and has no children. He runs a sustainability website on a voluntary basis and is passionate about saving energy and recycling. He is a vegetarian.

Mark is 55 years old and lives in North London. He grew up in North-East London. He is married and has two sons. He is an active member of his local sustainability group.

Lesley is 37 years old and lives in South London. She is originally from Kansas, USA, but she has lived in London for 20 years and her husband is British. She has written a cookbook that's about eating less meat and more vegetables. She has one son.

Susannah is 46 years old and lives in North London, where she also grew up. She has lived in different parts of England as well as in Spain for 6 years. She currently does not work and does not have any children. She is a vegan and passionate about sourcing her food locally and is an active member of her local sustainability group.

Joan is 60 years old and lives in North London, but grew up in South London. She is active in several environmental groups, as well as her local sustainability group. She has no children.

Andrew is 48 years old and lives in West London. He grew up in Southampton, UK. He has no children.

Appendix D: Price comparisons at supermarkets

Tesco Metro

Place: Notting Hill
Date: 27/8-13

Food	Price organic	Place of origin	Price non-organic	Place of origin
Bananas	23.1p each	Dominican Republic	20p each	Cameroon
Apples	Pink lady 62.5p each	New Zealand	Pink lady 40p each	New Zealand
Strawberries	£10/kg	Herefordshire, UK	£6.67/kg	Cambridgeshire, UK
Blueberries	£16.62/kg	Poland	£8/kg	Poland
Chicken	Breast £17/kg	UK	Breast £12/kg, Thigh £8.58/kg, Whole £5.5/kg	UK
Beef mince	N/A	-	£8/kg	UK
Rump steak	N/A	-	£19/kg	UK
Flour	N/A	-	£1.79/kg	
Eggs	35p each	UK	20p each	UK
Milk	£1.01/litre	UK	61.2p/litre	UK
Carrots	1.36/kg	UK	Package £1.30/kg, loose 90p/kg	UK
Potatoes	N/A	-	£1/kg	UK

Sainsbury's Local

Place: Westbourne Grove
Date: 27/8-13

Food	Price organic	Place of origin	Price non-organic	Place of origin
Apples	45p each	Spain	35p each	South Africa
Strawberries	N/A	-	£5/kg	Yorkshire, UK
Chicken	Breast £20/kg	UK	Breast £10.63/kg Thigh £4.16/kg Whole £2.86/kg	UK
Beef mince	N/A	-	£9/kg	UK
Rump steak	N/A	-	£16.29/kg	UK
Flour	N/A	-	83.3p/kg	
Eggs	39.2p each	UK	25.8p each	UK
Milk	£1/litre	UK	83p/litre	UK
Carrots	£1.47/kg	Norfolk, UK	Packaged £1.43/kg Loose 95p/kg	UK
Potatoes	N/A	-	£1.20/kg	UK

Waitrose

Place: Westfield, Shepherd's Bush
Date: 27/8-13

Food	Price organic	Place of origin	Price non-organic	Place of origin
Bananas	30.8p each	Dominican Republic	20p each (fair trade)	Colombia
Apples	Jazz 62.5 each	New Zealand	Jazz 45.8p each	New Zealand
Strawberries	£10.67/kg	Sussex, UK	£5/kg	Sussex, UK
Blueberries	£11.12/kg	Poland	£10/kg	Poland
Chicken	Breast£19.99/kg Thigh £8.70/kg	UK	Thigh £6.99 Whole £3.66	UK
Beef mince	£13.3/kg	UK	£10.98/kg	UK
Rump steak	£22.99/kg	UK	£19.99/kg	UK
Flour	£1.26/kg	-	73.3p/kg	-
Eggs	39.3p each	UK	35.8p each	UK
Milk	81p/litre	UK	78.3p/litre	UK
Carrots	£1.75/kg	Suffolk, UK	£1/kg	Norfolk, UK
Potatoes	£1.40/kg	Norfolk, UK	96.7p/kg	Suffolk, UK

M&S Foods

Place: Notting Hill
Date: 27/8-13

Food	Price organic	Place of origin	Price non-organic	Place of origin
Apples	Pink lady 78.8p each	Argentina	Pink lady 49.2p each	South Africa
Strawberries	N/A	-	£5/kg	Surrey, UK
Blueberries	N/A	-	£10.45/kg	Surrey, UK
Chicken	Breast£19.99/kg Thigh £6.99/kg Whole £7.09/kg	UK	Breast£12.04/kg Thigh £4.69/kg Whole £3.33/kg	UK
Beef mince	£14.38/kg	UK	£9.56/kg (lean), £6/kg (regular)	UK
Sirloin	£28.99/kg	UK	£21.99/kg	UK
Flour	N/A	-		
Eggs	41.5p each (large)	UK	34.2p each (large)	UK
Milk	£1/litre	UK	£1/litre	UK
Carrots	N/A	-	80p/kg	UK
Potatoes	N/A	-	£2.79/kg	UK

Whole Foods Market

Place: High Street Kensington
Date: 28/8-13

Food	Price organic	Place of origin	Price non-organic	Place of origin
Bananas	£1.79/kg	Dominican Republic	N/A	-
Apples	Red delicious £3.99/kg	Argentina	Pink lady £3.99/kg	South Africa
Strawberries	N/A	-	£3.49/400g	Herefordshire, UK
Blueberries	N/A	-	£2.99/125g	UK
Chicken	Breast £21.99/kg Thigh £8.99/kg Whole £6.99/kg	UK	Breast £15.99/kg Thigh £8.99/kg Whole £5.90/kg	UK
Beef mince	£13.16/kg	UK	£7.99/kg	UK
Sirloin	£29.95/kg	UK	£17.99/kg	UK
Flour	£1.33/kg	-	£1.33/kg	-
Eggs	40p each	UK	35p each	UK
Milk	95p/litre	UK	N/A	-
Carrots	£1.99/700g	UK	£2.79/bunch	UK
Potatoes	£1.99/750g	UK	£1.99/kg	UK

Planet Organic

Place: Westbourne Grove
Date: 27/8-13

Food	Price organic	Place of origin	Price Non-organic
Bananas	50p each	?	N/A
Apples	£4.69/kg	Chile/Argentina	-
Strawberries	£17.7/kg	Herefordshire, UK	-
Blueberries	£31.92/kg	Sussex, UK	-
Chicken	Breast £32.5/kg Thigh £15.68/kg Whole £10.78/kg	UK	-
Beef mince	£13.20/kg	UK	-
Rump steak	£30.53/kg	UK	-
Flour	£1.46/kg	-	-
Eggs	36.5p each	UK	-
Milk	£1.39/litre (some £1/litre)	UK	-
Carrots	£1.69/kg	Lincolnshire, UK	-
Potatoes	£1.99/kg	UK	-